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OR
THE FRIGATE AND THE LUGGER

BY
CAPTAIN ARMSTRONG



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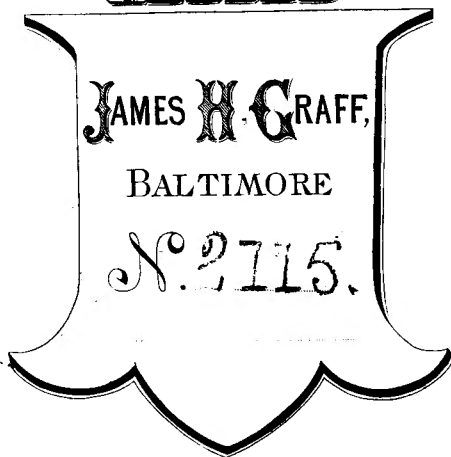
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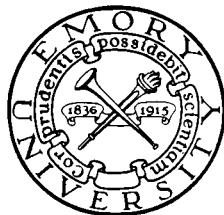
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BY

CAPTAIN F. C. ARMSTRONG,

AUTHOR OF "THE CRUISE OF THE DARING," "THE TWO MIDSHIPMEN,"
"THE MEDORA," "THE YOUNG COMMANDER," ETC.



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THE SAILOR HERO;

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CHAPTER I.

THE war with France had just commenced. Vice-Admiral Lord Hood hoisted his flag on board the *Victory*, of one hundred guns; and, with the English fleet under his command, sailed from Spithead.

Amongst the many midshipmen on board the *Victory*, were two youths, who will occupy prominent places in our story;—one, William Thornton, our intended hero, was at this period between sixteen and seventeen years of age, and was known on board the *Victory* as the Admiral's *protégé*. He was a high-spirited and generous youth, and had, thus early in life, distinguished himself on several occasions, and was a general favourite; but all that was known of his parentage was, that his supposed father had been formerly Lord Hood's favourite coxswain, and that the Admiral had taken him on board the *Victory* as one of his midshipmen. Henry Howard Etherton, the other, the younger son of a wealthy baronet, was nearly two years older than William Thornton, but unlike him in every respect, except, perhaps, in personal appearance. He was well-looking, tall, and of gentlemanly manners; he had served two years in another ship, had been four years the schoolfellow of William Thornton; and when he left the school, which he did before William, it was with a feeling of bitter hatred against his schoolfellow, and for no better reason than that he excelled him in mental acquirements, and bodily exercises.

The meeting of the two youths on board the *Victory* was a surprise to both.

William Thornton was, as we have said, a general favourite, but especially with a fine young fellow, named Saunders, a top-man, whose life he had saved under very trying circumstances.

Howard Etherton took especial care to circulate all he knew of young Thornton's antecedents. He stated that he passed at school as the son of Lord Hood's coxswain; but it was doubtful whose son he was; some one had paid his schooling and other expenses munificently, but that it was too bad to have as a comrade in the midshipmen's berth one of so doubtful, or at all events, of so low an origin.

Only some of Howard's cronies and toadies listened to these spiteful stories; the officers, perhaps, heard, but gave no heed to them, for the young midshipman was a noble-looking boy, singularly powerful and tall for his age.

One day nearly all the midshipmen happened to be assembled together in their berth, when one of their number, a stout youth of eighteen, who was noted for his envious disposition, took up a large book, like an account book, saying—

"Gentlemen, I wish to ask your attention for a moment."

Then, turning to William Thornton, he continued, with a serious countenance:—

"In this book, Master Thornton, we enter the names of our fathers and mothers, as well as of our sisters, provided we have any. Now, ours are all down; pray oblige me with your father's name, and also your mother's maiden name, if you remember such a personage."

William Thornton fixed his dark, expressive eyes upon the speaker with a most unmitigated expression of contempt; but with perfect self-control, said,—

"You cannot suppose, Master Joshua Dykes, that I am quite so green as to listen seriously to your nonsense. You have been put up to this intended insult by Howard Etherton, who knows remarkably well that I have the misfortune not to know who my parents were; therefore you are weak and silly enough to get this trash up for the express purpose of provoking me; but——"

"Oh, by St. Peter's toe! and that's a brass one," exclaimed a loud, manly voice, the speaker at the moment entering the midshipmen's berth, "give us your hand, William; I'll be your father and mother, and, faith, your grandmother too, if you're in want of one; you're a broth of a boy, and have shown us what pluck and heart can do. Now, if any of these sky-larking lubbers bother you again with their balderdash, by the powers of Moll Kelly, I'll tache them better manners. Hark ye, my lads! my name, as you all know, is Patrick O'Loughlin, and, as far as I know, I never had a father or mother; but look at this (and clenching his hand, he tucked up his sleeve, and stretched out an arm capable of felling an ox); there, this has been my father and mother, and, faith, a whole host of relations beside; it has made me third

lieutenant of the Victory ; and that's what I call being a father and mother. Now if any of you want to be better acquainted with William Thornton's father and mother, he can show you just such another fist and arm, and is quite willing to give you a taste of it, to establish his parentage ; and now, William, come with me ; I want to have half-an-hour's chat with you."

Most of the mids burst into a hearty laugh, taking the Lieutenant's words good-humouredly, for he was greatly loved by all the officers and crew of the ship. Howard Etherton and two others, his special cronies, sneered, though they evidently did not admire Lieutenant O'Loughlin's father and mother.

William Thornton and Lieutenant O'Loughlin sat down in the latter's berth, with a bottle of light wine and some biscuits before them.

"Now tell me, William," said the kind-hearted Lieutenant, "all you know about yourself. You promised to tell me. We have an idle hour now—to-morrow may see us in action."

"Most willingly, dear friend," replied our hero. "I have no desire to conceal any part of my history, and least of all from you ; so now listen to a very short yarn, and then you will know as much as I do myself."

"I was reared in a cottage at Deal, by one of the kindest and most generous of men, and whom I honour and love as a fond father. He was once coxswain to Lord Hood, but, having lost a leg and an arm in the service, now lives upon a pension. Shortly after his retirement, he was left a comfortable annuity, and persuaded a sister of his—a widow in poor circumstances—to live with him, purchased a pretty cottage on the sea-coast near Walmer, where I grew up till I was eight years old."

"I was then sent to one of the best seminaries in the county, where I first met Howard Etherton. I remained at school till I was fourteen years old, when I returned to my supposed father's cottage. He told me I was going to serve His Majesty as a midshipman. I was delighted. One evening the old tar, who was never so happy as when relating sea-yarns, said, 'Bill, my lad, I'll spin you a yarn ; mix my grog—there, you're bountiful with the water—sit quiet and listen, for it concerns you.'

"'I was aboard the Quebec, 36-gun frigate,' began the old tar, 'commanded by as brave a fellow as ever trod a deck. We were cruising off Ushant, with the Rambler cutter in company. It was the month of October, in the year 177—, we fell in with a large frigate to the sou-west of Ushant, and she had a smart cutter cruising in company. Well, we were soon hammering away at it, and kept it up for three mortal hours. Our decks were slippery with blood, our masts all gone, and our sails, lying over the guns, caught fire, and soon

after we blew up, with our colours flying, and—the Lord be merciful to us!—our captain, and most of our crew were hurled into the air.

“I can’t say how I got out of her; all I remember is that I found myself struggling in the water amid a mass of rigging and spars. I was finally picked up and carried on board the French frigate *Surveillante*, where I found several of my ship-mates. We were treated with the greatest kindness, by order of the dying commander, who also desired that we should be put aboard the first neutral vessel they came across, for we had fought gallantly and nobly, and it was not our fault that the ship blew up.

“The French frigate had suffered awfully; her masts, sails, and rigging were cut to pieces, and her crew half killed and wounded. We were permitted to walk about the deck. I could speak a little of their lingo, and some of them spoke ours.

“One morning I saw a little boy, not much more than two years old, toddling about the ship’s deck, and, to my surprise, I heard him speak some words in English to one of the men.

““You may parley-vous to that little chap in your own language,” said one of the sailors, seeing me caress the child—for I was always soft-hearted, and the child took to me at once. “How did he come here?” asked I.

““Why,” said the Frenchman, “about ten days before we fought your frigate, in a heavy gale we ran down a ship in the night; we put out our boats, though it did blow a treble-reefed-topsail breeze, but all we could see was the long boat, and all that we found inside of it was that child, wrapped up in a heap of blankets. The poor little thing was half dead with wet and cold.” That’s all I could learn, but the man said, and I could see it, “that the child was sure to be a gentleman’s son, his little garments were so costly and handsome.”

“Well, after a time jury-masts were rigged and we made way; but a gale drove the frigate ashore on Gros Point, to the lee of Isle Dieu. A scene of terrible confusion ensued, in the midst of which, I, with eight comrades, got off in one of the boats. I took the child with me, for I loved it, and it was English. The next day we were picked up by the —, 74, commanded by Rear-Admiral Hood, who was proceeding to join the fleet under Admiral Rodney. We were all glad, of course, to join that ship, and be under so gallant and brave a seaman.

“The child became the pet of the ship, he throve like a young bantam, and crowed like one whenever he heard a gun fired.

“The admiral called me to the quarter-deck, and desired me to say how I came by the child, and I did so. Before I left

the ship I became his coxswain, and, to finish my yarn,' said Bill Thornton, finishing his grog, 'I now tell you you are the child so strangely found on board the *Surveillante*.'

"You may imagine my emotion, O'Loughlin, when I heard this, and how I blessed and caressed the dear old man for the love he had bestowed upon me.

"Now this is all I have to tell you, dear friend; I went to sea shortly after in the — frigate as midshipman, and in the course of two years was appointed to this ship through the interest Bill Thornton had with his old commander. The admiral knows I am the same child that used to toddle about the quarter-deck of the — 74, when he commanded her, and thus probably feels an interest for me from the peculiarity of my introduction on board his ship, and his esteem for his old and favourite coxswain."

"Here's your health, my lad," said the Lieutenant, tossing down a full glass, "and here's my hand; I'll be a second father to you. I'm five-and-twenty, and upon my conscience it appears to me I have lived fifty years, or I was in some other person's skin before I got sewed up in this, I've been so knocked about in this world. We are in a glorious service, and if we have luck, why, by St. Patrick, we may advance to be admirals by the time we get to seventy!"

CHAPTER II.

In the month of August the British fleet, under Lord Hood, arrived before the port of Toulon. Two commissioners from the Royalist party came on board the *Victory*, to treat for the surrender of the port and shipping to the British. William Thornton's favorite companion amongst the mids was a youth named Charles Pole, a fine spirited lad of his own age. They were leaning over the bulwarks, gazing at the boats rowing aboard with the two commissioners, and then a look was cast at the bold high land of Cape Cesi, and the entrance to the noble gulf of Toulon.

"I wish they would commence hammering away at those grim looking forts on the heights," said Charles Pole to his comrade, "I'm tired of doing nothing."

"*Il dolce far niente*," said William Thornton, "the Italian's supreme delight, that and serenading his lady love by the light of a bright moon."

"Oh! wait a bit, my beauties," said O'Loughlin, joining them, "you won't talk of the *dolce far niente* in a day or two, for it's all up with negotiations. We shall have those grim

forts talking to us shortly, and faith, I'm longing myself to have a bout with those republican bloodhounds."

O'Loughlin was right in his conjectures. Lord Hood, in great perplexity as to the intentions of the royalist party, resolved upon the hazardous experiment of sending an officer into the town to ascertain how matters stood, being aware that Rear-Admiral St. Julian with the bulk of the French fleet sided with the Republicans.

This perilous expedition was confided to the judgment and courage of Lieutenant Edward Cooke, who was to select a midshipman to accompany him.

"Take Thornton, Cooke," said O'Loughlin, "that's the lad for the work; as courageous as a lion and as cool as a lettuce. Do you remember how he behaved in the affair off Cadiz? If you come back safe, which I predict you will, it will be a feather in his cap."

"The very one I would have selected," said Lieutenant Cooke; "but he's too young to run the gauntlet through the French fleet; it's almost a pity."

To the great delight of Thornton he was selected.

"I think," said Howard Etherton, with a malicious grin, and giving his chum Dykes a poke in the ribs, "I think we shall be one less in our mess by this time to-morrow. I suppose he will leave his kit to you, Pole?"

"I hope he will live to break your head yet," said Charles Pole, with a look of contempt as he walked on.

"Thank you, Master Pole; we shall not forget that," bawled out Howard Etherton.

A remarkably fast gig was selected to take the Lieutenant and his young companion, and eight picked men, Saunders, the top-man, being one of them. It was ten o'clock at night when the gig left the side of the ship. It was blowing very fresh, and, considering the time of year, extremely dark. Our hero was steering.

"Now, William," said the Lieutenant, "keep her away for the high land, yonder; and when we come abreast of the ships, steer boldly right into the midst of them."

After entering the harbour, our hero could see the light on the dockyard pier plain enough; and he knew from drafts and maps every inch of the outward and inner harbour, whilst the Committee-General were aware of the intended attempt to communicate with them.

The boat flew through the water, under the strokes of eight vigorous oarsmen, and passed close under the stern of a huge hundred-and-twenty-gun ship, which they knew was the *Commerce de Marseilles*. There were eighteen or more ships moored in two lines, with a considerable space between, through

which the light boat was impelled rapidly, and without even a challenge from any of the ships. It was evidently taken for one of their own boats. William Thornton steered steadily for the jetty, which was known to be in the hands of the royalist party. In a few minutes they were alongside the pier, which was crowded with persons of all grades and denominations, the soldiers on duty finding it almost impossible to keep them back. A naval officer came to the side of the boat, and addressed Lieutenant Cooke, saying—

"You have done a daring feat, monsieur; and, fortunately, you have succeeded. I am desirous to let you know that until to-morrow morning you cannot land. It would be dangerous."

"Very good," said Lieutenant Cooke. "We can pass the rest of the night in our boat-cloaks."

"Wine and refreshments," continued the officer, "shall be sent to you for yourself and men; and I pray you, monsieur, not to feel aggrieved at this delay; it is unavoidable."

Ere half-an-hour had elapsed a large hamper was handed on board the boat, and then they were told to pull off from the jetty, and make fast to one of the buoys, which they did.

"Come my lads," said Lieutenant Cooke, "rip up the hamper, and let us feel the contents if we can't see them; we shall not require light to appease our hunger."

William Thornton was delighted with the excitement of the affair. They could hear the various sounds from the interior of the town; loud shouts and cries, and all the noises attending the assembly of a number of people in the street; but all was perfectly quiet within the dockyard and basin. Not a boat passed in or out, and the crowd, a while back standing on the jetty, were all put outside the gates, and only the sentries remained, walking backwards and forwards on their watch.

The hamper contained a dozen of wine, a couple of fowls, and a ham, with abundance of bread.

"Well, by Jove, William, this is not bad; I suppose you expected a mess of frogs, or some other outlandish dish, eh?"

"I prefer the half of a fowl, I confess," returned our hero, pulling out his knife to commence operations; "though frogs may not be such a bad dish as we may imagine."

"Oh, confound their frogs!" said the Lieutenant, drawing a cork out of one of the bottles. "By Jupiter! there's neither cup nor glass of any kind."

"Here's a horn, your honour," said one of the men; "I brought it, thinking it might serve a turn somehow if we got anything better than water."

"You're a thoughtful man, Saunders," said the Lieutenant; "hand it here," and giving it a rinse first with water and then with wine, he filled himself a bumper and tossed it off. "Good

Bordeaux, by Jove! and no mistake. Come, these fellows know what's good."

"There's a row in the town, Mr. Cooke," said the midshipman; "you can hear them rioting very distinctly."

"Those cursed, bloodthirsty Republicans trying to cut the throats of the Royalists, I suppose," returned the Lieutenant; "and that's the reason they would not let us land during the tumult. We shall have to remain here till to-morrow night, as we cannot attempt to pass the ships in the broad daylight."

Telling the men to help themselves to the remains of the fowl and ham, and letting them have a couple of bottles of wine between them, a regular watch having been set, the Lieutenant and midshipman wrapped themselves up in their boat-cloaks, and reclined on the thwarts, conversing together till they dropped off into a short slumber. William Thornton slept an hour or two, and then, waking, sat up; the Lieutenant was fast asleep, and so were the men, excepting the two that kept watch. The night was still extremely dark, but as our hero sat gazing over the dark water, looking at the huge dismasted hulls of some unfinished war vessels, he thought he heard at a little distance a splashing in the water, like a person swimming.

"Do you see anything in the water, right ahead, Saunders?" asked the midshipman to one of the watch, stooping down low as he spoke, and looking along the surface of the water.

"I thought as how I heard a noise, sir," said the man; "and I think I see a dark object moving towards us."

"So do I now," returned William Thornton; "it is a man swimming. Hush! do not make a noise, one man cannot hurt us."

Bill Saunders put down the boat-stretcher he had taken up with the laudable intention of hitting the swimmer over the head, and the next moment a man swam up alongside, stripped all to his drawers, holding up his hand and requesting them to make no noise. He seized the gunnel of the boat, and Saunders and the other men being roused helped him in. The heeling over of the boat rolled Lieutenant Cooke off the thwart, who immediately sprang up, saying—

"Hollo, William! what's in the wind now?"

Our hero told him that a man had swum alongside with a letter in his cap for the English officer, and that they had taken him on board. Fortunately, both Lieutenant Cooke and Thornton spoke French fluently.

"Well, monsieur," said the Lieutenant, looking at the Frenchman in the dim light, and taking the letter, "I cannot read this till daylight; tell me, if you please, what it is about, and what has induced you to incur so great a risk."

"I have undertaken this adventure, monsieur," returned the

stranger, "to serve a most persecuted lady, a countrywoman of yours, and of high rank in this country. She is even now concealed in the vaults of a house in the Rue Province. She escaped from the fearful massacres of Lyons in a miraculous manner, even when brought out with her young daughter to be shot, by order of that infernal monster Collet de Herbois."

Lieutenant Cooke and the midshipman listened to the stranger's account with considerable interest, and no little surprise. Our hero had lent the stranger his boat-cloak, and given him a small quantity of brandy, and Lieutenant Cooke then said—

"May I ask, monsieur, who you are, that have so generously perilled your life to serve this lady?"

"I was, monsieur, the intendant of the husband of Madame la Duchesse, her second husband, who alas! perished with many other loyal noblemen in defending his unfortunate king. Her first husband was an English gentleman of the name of Arden, perhaps you may know the name, the Duchess's daughter is by her first husband."

"The Ardens are an old and wealthy family," said Lieutenant Cooke; "but I do not know them. I should be delighted to serve this unfortunate lady and her daughter, but you see, I am now employed upon a most important mission, and dare not depart from my instructions, or take part in any private affair. Nevertheless, some effort must be made to rescue this lady; but could she not trust herself to the Royalist party in Toulon; they are strong, are they not?"

"No, in truth, monsieur, they are not, as I fear the result will show. Madame la Duchesse is, I am satisfied, closely sought after. She trusted herself to the Royalists of Lyons, and would, but for my assistance, have perished. Once known to in be Toulon, she would be sacrificed long before she could be got on board the British fleet."

Lieutenant Cooke thought for a moment and then said—

"To-morrow morning I am to meet the committee-general, respecting the surrender of the town and ships. If the town is given up, madame and her daughter will be instantly placed in safety. But as this may not happen, could not you, monsieur, conduct this young gentleman," putting his hand on the midshipman's shoulder, "to-morrow morning to where madame is concealed? He may be able, by conversing with her, to plan some method of getting her and her daughter to the sea-shore of the outer harbour by to-morrow night, for we cannot leave in the day-time, and thus, as we pass out, we may be enabled to take them on board."

"That is a very good idea of yours, monsieur," said the Frenchman; "therefore, if this young gentleman comes on

shore to-morrow morning, I will secretly watch for his landing, and as you all proceed through the streets to the Committee-General's, I will contrive to attract his attention; then if he will follow me at a short distance, I will introduce him to madame."

"Very good," said William Thornton, "I will keep a sharp look-out for you, and if you hold up your hand it will be sufficient."

"How far have you to swim?" questioned Lieutenant Cooke.

"Not very far, monsieur," said the stranger; "there is no boom across the basin, and once outside, I land where I left my garments."

The Frenchman thanked the Lieutenant for his courtesy, slipped over the side, and noiselessly made his way through the still waters of the basin, and was soon lost to sight.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER the departure of the Frenchman, Lieutenant Cooke and William Thornton commented upon what they had just heard.

"I forgot to ask the stranger," remarked the Lieutenant, "the lady's present title; he called her Madame la Duchesse. Her former name, at all events, was Arden."

"I dare say," said the midshipman, "the note he presented will explain, and perhaps give some further particulars of her situation."

"True, I forgot the note; there will be daylight in another hour, its getting grey to the eastward. A terrible scene this poor lady and her child must have witnessed in Lyons," continued the lieutenant; "the atrocities committed there by that fiend, Collet de Herbois, exceeds all human belief. The wretch found the guillotine too slow for his bloodthirsty soul; he had the unfortunate people of Lyons actually shot down by cannon, loaded with grape shot, hundreds at a time. He even undermined the streets, and blew up the houses with gunpowder,* tied his victims to trees, and shot them down like wild beasts. In five months this detestable monster slaughtered six thousand persons."

"What extraordinary infatuation!" exclaimed our hero. "I can scarcely understand human beings becoming so suddenly seized with such a thirst for blood."

Lieutenant Cooke, finding the daylight rapidly increasing,

* Fact.

's letter. It was addressed in a

"TO THE ENGLISH OFFICER IN COMMAND OF THE VICTORY'S
BOAT."

Opening the letter, he read its contents in a low voice to William Thornton.

"Sir,—Hearing that a boat from the British Admiral's ship was lying in the dock basin, inspired me with the hope of being rescued from the perilous situation in which, with my daughter, I am placed. I am native of England, and the widow of the late Duke de Coulancourt. My first husband, the father of my little girl, was the Honourable James Somers Arden. My anxious desire is, if possible, to get on board one of the British ships, hoping thus to be able to reach England. If, therefore, any assistance can be rendered me, I shall for ever pray for the welfare of those to whom my gratitude will be due. You may implicitly trust Monsieur Jean Plessis, the bearer of this; he can give you every information.

"ANNE COULANCOURT,
"née DE BRACEY."

"Well, William, you must do your best, and try and see this poor lady and her little girl," said Lieutenant Cooke. "If they could manage to get on the beach to the eastward of the shipping, along which we pass to get clear of the harbour, we might readily pick them up. I do not know the locality myself, but Monsieur Plessis, I dare say, knows how to get them there. Now let us pull in for the quay, I see a number of persons assembled; and there goes a signal for us. Be very cautious, William, how you act. Get back to the boat as soon as you can; Saunders will keep a good look out for you, and haul off from the quay till he sees either you or me. Now, my lads," added the Lieutenant, "pull in for the pier."

On reaching the pier, they found the Commissioners and several other naval officers in full uniform, waiting to receive them. As Lieutenant Cooke leaped on shore, followed by our hero, two of the Commissioners advanced and offered many apologies for leaving them in their boat all night. The tumultuous assemblies in the town was the cause. Breakfast was prepared for them in a mansion near the dock gates, after partaking of which they would conduct Lieutenant Cooke before the constituted authorities to hear his proposals. Accordingly, they all went through the dock gates, a vast concourse of people of the very lowest grade was assembled outside, and various cries and violent vociferations saluted their ears. There were royalists and republicans, Jacobins and Girondists, all

furious and excited ; nevertheless, they proceeded unmolested to the house where breakfast was prepared for them ; after which, accompanied by more than twenty gentlemen and officers, Lieutenant Cooke arrived at the chamber where the Commissioners sat awaiting them.

"Be cautious, and take care of yourself, William," whispered the Lieutenant, as the midshipman dropped into the rear without being particularly noticed, for the crowd rushed eagerly after Lieutenant Cooke, and his escort, Thornton, walked quietly on, attired in a plain jacket and trousers, without any marks of a naval uniform on them ; his dirk he left in the boat purposely, but he carried a brace of small pistols in his pockets.

As the crowd rushed on, William Thornton found himself proceeding up a narrow street, when he suddenly felt a hand laid upon his arm. The man who had touched him passed on, but turning round, looked him in the face with a peculiar expression on his features.

"That is our friend of last night," thought the midshipman, and he followed him at a little distance. The man presently turned down a deserted side street, for almost the entire population of the town were assembled before the hall where the Committee-General sat ; an intense state of excitement existing, for it was then known that General Castenau, the fierce Republican General, was before Marseilles, and this created a fearful panic amongst the royalists, and a source of fiend-like rejoicing with the bloodthirsty Republicans. Following the stranger through several bye-streets, he suddenly dived beneath an arch, making a sign to our hero to be quick after him. William Thornton did not delay, and passing under the arch he found himself in a very small court, with his guide standing before the door of an apparently deserted house.

"This is fortunate, monsieur," said the man, "the streets, you see, are totally deserted ; no one, I think, saw us enter this court."

Unlocking the door, they traversed a dark, damp passage. Pushing open a side door, they entered a small room, totally unfurnished, the light being admitted through a half-open shutter.

"Please to stay here a few minutes, monsieur," said Jean Plessis ; "I will get madame up from the vaults into another room, where she usually stays when I am in the house to watch. When I am absent, she and her daughter keep below ; their place of concealment would not be easily discovered."

"Poor lady !" said William Thornton ; "what a state for one of her rank to live in. But are there not many Royalist families in the town not forced to live in such a state of concealment ?"

"Yes," said Jean Plessis, "but there is only one Duchesse of Coulancourt. Collet de Herbois would give ten thousand francs for her head. There are many of his spies here, who will soon track me. There will be more blood spilt here than even in Lyons."

He then departed.

"That is very odd," thought the midshipman. "With a magnificent British and Spanish fleet before the town, surely, if the Admiral pleases, he could take the town and fort at any time, and drive these horrid Republicans into the sea."

William Thornton was a young reasoner; he did not know that there were wheels within wheels in politics; that, with the finest fleet in the world, it was sometimes the policy of ministers to do nothing with it. As it turned out, however, the fleet did get possession of the fort and the town, but only to abandon it and its wretched inhabitants afterwards, to one of the most fearful massacres on record.

Our hero remained waiting for the return of Jean Plessis, wondering in his heart how the unfortunate Duchesse de Coulancourt and her daughter could dwell in so desolate and unwholesome a place.

In less than half-an-hour the Frenchman returned, saying:—

"I am sorry to have kept you, young gentleman, in so dismal a chamber; but madame is now ready to receive you. Please to follow me."

Our hero followed Jean Plessis through two or three dismal corridors and chambers, till, opening a door, he ushered him into a room partly furnished. There were two windows to the apartment, but only the top part of the shutters was kept open. As he entered the chamber—a little bashful, perhaps, for he was but seventeen, and but little accustomed to female society—he perceived a lady in deep mourning rise from a chair and advance to meet him; but he was more surprised when, instead of a fair young girl, as he expected to see, he observed a slight, fragile boy, with a pale and very thin face, but with eyes dark, large, and lustrous. He appeared about twelve years of age, and stood leaning against the high-backed chair of his mother.

The Duchess slightly started as she gazed up into the handsome, expressive features of the midshipman. For a moment she appeared to be reflecting, as if some past transaction was recalled by his presence.

"Ah!" said the lady, in French, speaking in a low voice, "he is young, very young;" but then, looking up, with a sweet smile on her pale but very beautiful features, she said, in English:—

"Pardon me, young gentleman, instead of wondering at your youth, I ought to have expressed my gratitude at seeing one so

young willing to incur so much risk in his desire to befriend a perfect stranger."

"But nevertheless, madame," said the young sailor, "a countrywoman. Lieutenant Cooke, my superior officer, would most willingly have come in my place, but that he was forced to attend a most important meeting with the Royalist committee. He, however, bade me say that any assistance he can offer you, will be a pleasure, and that perhaps you, madame, would be able to point out to me how that assistance can be rendered."

The Duchesse de Coulancourt seemed to reflect for a few moments, during which time our young midshipman had an opportunity of regarding her features and person, and also that of the young boy, looking so earnest and pensive beside her. The Duchess was tall, graceful in figure, and, though exceedingly pale and thin, her features were beautifully formed. Like the boy, her eyes were black, large, and expressive; with luxuriant black hair; and in years, as well as he could judge, not more than five or six-and-thirty. The boy was of a slight figure, dressed in the tunic and vest then worn by boys of his age; he had the same fine features as the mother, but his excessive thinness and pallor gave him a consumptive appearance, which was only relieved by the singularly expressive look about the eyes, and the beautifully marked eyebrows.

"I have been thinking all the morning," said the Duchess, rousing herself from her thoughts, "how to act in the painful and trying situation in which I am placed; for no human power could save me were I recognised, or known to be living in this town. Not even to the Royalist party would I venture to show myself, unless, indeed, the British Admiral ultimately gains possession of the town. My chief desire is to secure the safety of my beloved daughter. Come hither, Mabel. I have disguised her, as you see, like a boy. Poor child! she is so attenuated by fretting, confinement, and various other privations, that she appears a mere shadow."

Madame Coulancourt turned, and took her disguised daughter by the hand, the child's pale face slightly flushed as she saw that William Thornton's dark eyes were fixed upon her, with an expression of deep interest and surprise. The midshipman thought her plain, even with her large speaking eyes.

The Duchess sighed, and the tears ran down her cheeks as she kissed her daughter's forehead, and then taking her hand, she said:—

"Mabel, this young gentleman will be a brother to you. Pray what is your name?" she added, as our hero took the little hand in his, and stooped and kissed her forehead, with the dark hair cut close all round, like a boy's. "I know not how it is, but I feel a strange spirit of prophecy creeping over me, that

tells me you will serve this poor child, who is, as it were, alone in the world. You have a strong likeness, young sir, to some one I dearly loved ; but memory is almost dead within me. You will protect my child, I know you will ! ”

“ On my soul, madame,” returned William Thornton, with his eyes kindling with all the fire and romance of his enthusiastic disposition—“ on my soul, madame, I will do all I can ; willingly peril life if necessary to be of service to you or this dear little girl.”

The child pressed his hand to her lips, and her eyes full of tears were lifted to his, as she said :—

“ And Mabel will always be a sister to you, and love you with all her heart.” Prophetic words to her, which were never forgotten. “ I had a brother once,” she added ; and shuddering she said in a low broken voice, “ but they killed him.”

Madame Coulancourt drew her daughter towards her ; she was weeping, but, checking her feelings and her painful remembrances of terrible moments, now passed, she looked up, saying ;—

“ It is wrong thus to waste valuable time, by giving way to recollections of events that cannot be recalled. This morning I made up my mind how to act, after consulting with Monsieur Jean Plessis. This faithful friend of my unfortunate husband saved my life and my child’s life, risking not only his own existence, but the safety of a wife and child dear to him. He was Monsieur le Duke’s intendant and then mine ; but he is a man of good family, and at one time had considerable property ; but, like many alas ! in this land, stripped of all—of everything—save his noble devotion to me and mine. He procured these garments for my little girl, and agreed with me in my intention of confiding her to the care of the English officer, who was expected from the Admiral’s ship. Dressed thus, she may more easily pass through the town with you and thus gain the boat, and to-night Monsieur Plessis says he is pretty certain he will be able to get me disguised to the beach of the outer harbour, where there is a ruined quay that juts out into the sea ; and where, as you row along the shore in your boat, you may be able to take me in without attracting observation. Still I prefer my little girl going with you, because I am sure it will ensure her escape from this land of misery. Whereas a few hours hence—nay, the very result of the meeting now taking place—may rouse a furious bloodthirsty mob into sedition and outrage, for there are a hundred of the followers and spies of the atrocious Collet de Herbois in the town at this moment, leading the easily excited lower order into revolutionary excesses.”

“ Your daughter will be quite safe in the boat, madame,” said the midshipman earnestly, “ and I know that every protection will be afforded her when we reach the Victory. Perhaps,

madame, if you make the attempt you will succeed in getting safely to the boat now, whilst the mass of the people surround the council chamber."

"No! no!" said the Duchess sadly, "the risk of being recognised in broad daylight by some of the spies of De Herbois would be too great. Ah! young sir, if you only knew a hundredth part of the horrors and sufferings this dear child and I went through whilst in the power of those monsters who rule this once fair land, you would, like us, shudder at the very idea of again falling into their hands. Attired as my child is, she will escape notice walking by your side, whereas should an agent of De Herbois recognise me, we should be both lost."

Madame Coulancourt then rose and took from a table a casket, closing the lid as she placed it beside our hero, and locking it with a very peculiar key. It was a work of foreign manufacture, and beautifully clasped with silver, chased.

"I wish you, also, Master Thornton," continued Madame Coulancourt, "to take charge of this casket; for should it be the will of Heaven that I should be unable to rejoin my child —"

"Ah, mamma!" passionately interrupted the young girl, throwing her arms round her mother's neck, and weeping violently, "what words are those? No! no! I will not leave you; whatever peril you incur, your own Mabel will share it with you, and you shall not hear me murmur."

"But, my beloved child," said the mother soothingly, "even Jean Plessis himself says he would not be able to take us both to-night to the beach. You could not surmount the difficulties of the way. Besides, your presence would render us remarkable going through the gates; he has only a pass for two."

Thus the mother soothed her little girl, showing her how necessary it was for the salvation of both that she should put herself under the care of the young midshipman. After a time Mabel Arden allowed herself to be persuaded.

William Thornton also talked to and soothed the child; and she looked so confidently on him, and appeared to feel his kindness to her so much, that he vowed in his heart to suffer death sooner than Mabel should be injured whilst under his care.

"I was saying," said the Duchess, rewarding our hero with a sweet affectionate smile, "that I wish to confide this casket to your charge till we meet again. In it there are important letters and papers respecting my daughter and her relatives in England, who will at once acknowledge and receive her. There are also a few jewels of value, and money; but I trust in God we shall be able to join you to-night in the boats.

At what hour do you suppose you will leave the dock basin?"

"Perhaps, after ten o'clock, madame. It was very dark last night, when we passed through the shipping; and, as there is no moon, it will be nearly as dark to-night; or at all events, it will be only star-light. You ought, madame, to be provided with a dark lantern to show a light when your hear the noise of our oars, as we row along shore."

"No doubt Jean Plessis will provide one," said Madame de Coulandcourt; "but you will remember the ruined quay; he says you cannot mistake the spot, as it is the only erection of the kind on that line of beach. I trust I am not detaining you too long," said the Duchess; "I have now said all I have to say; so come, my beloved child, embrace me once more, and then I will confide you to the care of your young protector, whom may God prosper and preserve!"

Mabel threw herself into her mother's arms; again and again she kissed her passionately, whilst the tears streamed down both mother's and daughter's cheeks.

William Thornton was considerably affected at witnessing the suffering the separation caused Mabel and the Duchess. He spoke some kind and assuring words to the little girl, and what he said appeared to abate her grief. Madame de Coulandcourt then put a boy's cloak over her shoulders, and a cap on her head, and then summoned Jean Plessis, who kept watch without. This faithful friend of the Duchess de Coulandcourt was a tall and highly respectable-looking man, in years, scarcely forty, with a fine and expressive countenance. For several moments he conversed with our hero, respecting the place at which they were to meet that night; he described the inner and outward harbour accurately, and the best way for Lieutenant Cooke to steer on leaving the basin that night, and then covering the casket with a cloth cover, William Thornton took it under his care, remarking to himself that it was, for its size, uncommonly heavy.

"I shall go on before you, monsieur," said Jean Plessis, "till I bring you in sight of the dock gates. Should you by chance be questioned as to who the boy is with you, say your superior officer ordered you to take him with you, and that he is an English lad; they will not attempt to stop you."

Madame de Coulandcourt was greatly agitated on parting. She embraced William Thornton as she would had he been her son, and, drawing a ring from her finger, begged him to keep it in remembrance of her. Our hero was greatly impressed; he was beginning very early, indeed, to be a protector to a young girl, scarcely three years his junior; but he felt proud of the confidence placed in him, and interested beyond mea-

sure. Taking the weeping and trembling Mabel by the hand, they passed out from the house, Jean Plessis going first to see that all was clear; then making a sign to William Thornton, they all three proceeded down the street.

CHAPTER IV.

It became very apparent to our hero, after traversing one or two streets, that there was some great commotion going on in other parts of the town, for the shouts and outcries from the distance were deafening. As yet they had passed but few persons, and those seemed all to be hurrying in one direction.

Toulon at this period contained nearly five thousand inhabitants within its walls; three parts of this population were Republicans, and so were the bulk of the fleet. Jean Plessis led the way some distance ahead, when suddenly, in turning the corner of a street, they encountered a mob, swearing and shouting furiously; and to the great astonishment of William Thornton, he perceived that a large body of the people surrounded Lieutenant Cooke and a few of the Committee, and were evidently bent upon obstructing their path to the dock gates, which were now in sight. In a moment the young man and his terrified charge were pushed out of the road, and the next instant became mingled with the riotous mob they had so unfortunately stumbled upon. Still holding Mabel by the hand, the midshipman, a resolute and strong youth for his age, sturdily strove to gain the side of Lieutenant Cooke* and the Commissioners, who were arguing with the mob; but just then a ferocious-looking man, with his neck and throat bare, no coat on his back, but with an apron and a butcher's knife tied round his waist, suddenly clutched our hero by the collar, in a terrible grip, spluttering out:

"Ah, cursed aristocrat Anglais, what are you doing with this boy?"

Without a moment's hesitation William Thornton drew a pistol from his pocket, cocked it, and putting it close to the man's head, said—

"Let go, ruffian, or you are a dead man!"

The surly villain let go his hold with a horrid oath, and the midshipman, catching his young and terrified companion round the waist, burst through the startled group surrounding him,

* Lieutenant Cooke was arrested in the streets of Toulon by the mob, but was in the end allowed to proceed to his boat.—*James's Naval History*.

and the next instant was by Lieutenant Cooke's side, just as a large body of the Committee and a Royalist guard of marines came up to protect the British envoy.

"Is that you, William?" said the Lieutenant, astonished. "Put up your pistol; do not let them see you armed. What boy is this?"

"I will tell you, sir, when we get to the boat; but push on for the dock gates, they are getting furious. See that tall ruffian—I should like to shoot him—is exciting the mob."

"How bloodthirsty you are, William," said the Lieutenant, and then turning to some of the Commissioners, he urged their getting within the dock gates as soon as possible. The marines cleared the way, and in a few minutes they were safe within the gates, but not before the huge butcher, struggling through the crowd, had aimed a large brick with violence at our hero, shouting out—

"Take that, cursed aristocrat! I will have your head one of these days!"

The missile missed its intended mark, but knocked down one of the Commissioners in front. William Thornton would have shot the fellow instantly, but Lieutenant Cooke pushed him inside the gate with his little charge, saying—

"By Jove, you *are* a hot-headed boy; your impetuosity must be restrained!"

The great gates of the dock basin being closed, kept out the mob, and the party proceeded quietly along the jetty.

"I fear, Mabel," said the midshipman, stooping and looking into the little pale face of his charge, "all this has frightened you very much."

"Yes," said the child, in her quiet, sweet voice; "but I am more frightened about mamma; and, awhile ago, I thought more of you, when that horrid man seized you, than of myself."

"Well, please God, Mabel, your mamma will join us to-night. At all events, all danger to you is over; there is our boat yonder pulling in for the jetty."

Lieutenant Cooke, taking our hero by the arm, said, in a low voice—

"Well, how did you get on? and who is that delicate-looking boy?"

"This is the Duchesse De Coulancourt's little girl," returned William Thornton. "We shall take the Duchess up on the beach to-night as we go by; but I will tell you all when I get on board. What occurred at the meeting?"

"A precious row, my lad; I thought at one time we should all have had our throats cut. However, in the end, they signed a declaration, agreeing to our Admiral's proposal, so all

we have to do is to get back to our ship, and I suppose in a day or so we shall be in possession of the town or port."

On board one of the dismasted craft in the basin, provisions and all kinds of drinkables were prepared for the English officers and the crew of the gig, and thither they all proceeded, with several naval officers of the Royalist party. No one seemed to notice the child; whether they thought he came in the boat with them or not, William Thornton could not say; but, leaving the Lieutenant to entertain the French officers, the midshipman and his *protégée* sat down in one of the private cabins of the frigate, and Bill Saunders brought them a share of the repast from the main cabin.

Mabel recovered her spirits a little when our hero told her that the Royalists would hold possession of the town, and that the British fleet would sail into the port in a day or two, so that there would be no fear of her mamma, even if she was not able to join them that night.

"Ah!" said the little girl; "but what will become of me, in this horrid dress, if she does not? Are there any females on board your ship?"

"No, Mabel, there are not (luckily," he added to himself, "or adieu to discipline); but if by any chance your mamma should be prevented joining us, I will take you on board the Thetis; Captain Timmins's wife and daughter are there. They are going in a day or two to Genoa; they will, I am sure, take great care of you for a night or two."

"Oh! dear William," said the child, anxiously clasping his hand in hers, "do not let me go from you; put me in any corner near you; I won't mind wearing this dress for a day or two, but do not send me amongst strangers. I look upon you as a brother now."

Our hero promised all he could promise, but he recollected that, after all, he was but a midshipman, and one without rank or station, and entirely depending on his own exertions. However, he tried to keep up the poor girl's spirits, and, by chatting to her, keep her from fretting.

"How long, Mabel," questioned young Thornton, "were you confined in that dismal house I found you in?"

"Oh, nearly—let me see—yes, fully a month; sometimes in the dismal vaults. When good Jean Plessis was out getting food we always went below, and he closed the trap down over us. Oh, how damp and chill it was; but we were well wrapped up in blankets, and he never stayed away more than an hour or two at most."

"I think I heard your mamma say she escaped from Lyons, and that you suffered much there?"

"Oh, you can't think what we endured! You must know

we were living in a very grand château, belonging to mamma's husband, the Duke de Coulancourt, who, alas! was beheaded in Paris, for fighting for the poor king. Oh, my poor mamma, when Jean Plessis came from Paris with the frightful intelligence, lost her senses. My brother—dear brother Julien—was furious and distracted. He was only fifteen; he wanted to go to Paris, but Jean Plessis said we must fly or we should perish, for the order was to arrest all the Duke's family. But, alas! mamma was not able to fly; we moved into Lyons, thinking to be safer there, as they were all Royalists. I am not able to tell you all mamma suffered whilst there; she will tell you herself, another time. I am now so frightened and anxious about her that I can scarcely recollect anything."

Thus the remainder of the day passed, till Lieutenant Cooke's entertainers, officers and all, quitted the ship, leaving the English officer to make his daring passage through the hostile fleet.

"Now, William, tell me all about your adventure," said Lieutenant Cooke to his young companion—little Mabel being fast asleep in a berth, worn out by fatigue and great anxiety, with the casket placed at her feet.

William Thornton made his superior officer fully acquainted with all that had occurred, and explained the manner in which they were to take the Duchesse de Coulancourt on board.

"By Jupiter!" returned Lieutenant Cooke, looking surprised, and not a little puzzled, "you are a young hero, William, for an adventure with Royalist duchesses and Republican ruffians, and all of a sudden to become the protector of a young girl and a valuable casket. Faith! it's a very curious affair. What shall we do if circumstances prevent us pulling along the beach where we may expect to find this unfortunate lady? We may be suspected by some of the nearest men-of-war; and, if so, the whole bay along that beach is exposed to their fire. Supposing we fail in rescuing the mother, what in the name of fate is to be done with this poor little child? A girl, too, on board a ship with above a thousand sea bears in her!—nice nurses for a delicate child, eh?"

"I was thinking," said the midshipman, "if, as you say, we miss the mother, that she might be received by Captain Timmins's lady and daughter. They are on board the Thetis frigate, which is going to Genoa. The Captain's wife and daughters are to land at Malta, I understand."

"Faith! may be Captain Timmins would not be very much obliged to you for troubling his good lady with the care of such a delicate little girl as the poor thing asleep there."

"She is only delicate from suffering and privation," said

William Thornton ; " besides, she belongs to a good English family, who will receive her most willingly ; and who knows what's in this casket—the Duchess said there were jewels of value."

" Well, by Jove ! my lad," said the good-humoured Lieutenant, " you are standing up stoutly for your young *protégée*. However, there's no use imagining disasters that may not occur. Her mother may be rescued ; and, if not, we must do our best for the child, and try to get her to England. Now I think of it, there are two transports returning to England at anchor outside, and lots of women on board one of them, so, at least, I heard. However, let us get ready for a start ; it's nearly time, so wake up your little charge."

It was nearly eleven o'clock ere the boat left the basin to return to the Victory. Mabel Arden, carefully muffled in a boat-cloak, and keeping as close to her young protector as she dared, was extremely anxious, and won upon the goodnature of Lieutenant Cooke by her gentle, affectionate manner, and sweet, interesting face. It was a very still, fine night, but fortunately much overcast. Having passed out into the inner harbour, the men pulled steadily, and without speaking a word, till they cleared the dangerous vicinity of some of the vessels of war anchored near the dock basin. Without being challenged, they gained the outward harbour, avoiding the line of heavy ships anchored in double rows. William Thornton kept the boat away from the shore. As there is no tide in Toulon harbour, or in the Mediterranean, of more than a few inches, and that merely caused by peculiar gales of wind, they were able to row close along the beach. It was scarcely possible to distinguish objects on the shore, so, for fear those they expected might miss them, a dark lantern was opened, with its light towards the beach. They could distinctly distinguish the huge hulls and masts of the nearest men-of-war, several of them not being more than a couple of hundred yards from them. As they pulled slowly along, they suddenly beheld a bright light ashore ; it was held up for a moment only, and then all became dark again, but at the same moment a hail from the nearest ship came over the still waters.

" Pull in, my men," said the Lieutenant. " By Jove ! we are seen, and shall have a shot next."

The next moment the boat's keel touched the beach, close beside a ruined quay. A man came forward. The midshipman knew him at once ; it was Jean Plessis. Mabel threw off her cloak, exclaiming eagerly, in French—

" Mon Dieu ! Mon Dieu ! Where is mamma, Monsieur Jean Plessis ? "

the harbour, monsieur; we are betrayed. I will explain—ha! there goes a gun.” The same moment a ball struck the ruined wall some four paces from them, knocking a heap of rubbish about, and covering them with a cloud of splinters.

“Push off—by Jove! that’s close shaving!”—said Lieutenant Cooke; “and give way with a will.”

On flew the light boat, and again a flash, and a prolonged report pealed over the water, the shot drenching them with spray, as it actually bounded over them, and tore along the beach afterwards; but, vigorously urged along by the hardy crew, they turned a long, projecting point of high rock, that effectually sheltered them from further danger. The agonised Mabel, bursting into tears, implored Jean Plessis to say what had become of her mother.

“My poor child,” said the Frenchman, with great feeling in voice and manner, “don’t be alarmed; there is no fear of the Duchess’s life, but they have carried her off.”

“Oh, my God! I shall never see mamma again. Why, why did I leave her? If they have taken her away they would have taken me too.”

“How has this occurred?” said Lieutenant Cooke, while the midshipman strove to soothe the weeping girl.

“I will tell you, monsieur,” said Jean Plessis, “and then you must put me on shore, for I will never cease till I trace madame to where her enemies have taken her. She has not been, I feel certain, carried off by the revolutionary party, but by private enemies, who have contrived to track us to Toulon.”

“Why do you think that, Monsieur Plessis?” asked Lieutenant Cooke.

“I will tell you, monsieur,” replied the Frenchman. “We had scarcely passed the gates, and were making the best of our way to gain the appointed spot—the ruined quay—when from behind a low hedge half-a-dozen men sprang out. I was instantly knocked down by a blow from the butt end of a carbine, and rolled into a ditch. I was quite sensible, but remained still. They had seized the Duchess; she did not scream nor attempt to fly. I then heard one of the men say, ‘Bring up the Berlin;’ the next moment a calèche with two horses came out from behind the hedge through a gateway. Madame was put inside, and then the same man said, ‘Parbleu! I forgot; have you finished that fellow Plessis? Do not leave him to be hunting us out, I pray you; it’s bad enough to lose the little girl.’ As soon as I heard these words, I crept along the ditch, and fled as fast as I could, to save those villains the trouble of knocking me on the head.”

“Have you any idea,” said Lieutenant Cooke, “who these ruffians are?”

"I suspect they are employed by a kinsman of the late Duke and next heir, who would have inherited the property, had not the Duchess's husband, some five years ago, made over the whole of his property to her, having had the power to will it to whom he pleased. This kinsman's name is Ganel-Maria Montaut. He will not bring the Duchess to the guillotine, because, if she loses her life, the estates will be seized by the nation. Collet de Herbois would destroy her from motives of hatred and vengeance, she having scorned his daring proposals, after her husband's death."

"Then what do you think the best to do with this poor child?" questioned William Thornton, anxiously, as the keel of the boat grounded on a shingly beach.

"Get her as soon as possible to England, where she has wealthy relatives," said Jean Plessis, "and God will reward you. The Ardens are of good family; besides, there are jewels of great value in that casket you have. As to me, I will never cease till I trace Madame la Duchesse, and if I can I will communicate with Mademoiselle Arden hereafter in England."

So saying, he took the weeping girl in his arms and kissed her affectionately, and then, laying his hand on William Thornton's arm, said emphatically—

"Never desert this little girl whilst you have life and power to assist her;" the next moment he sprang on shore, waved his hand, and disappeared in the obscurity of the night.

Mabel burst into a flood of tears, and putting her little arms round young Thornton's neck, exclaimed—

"Oh! my mother! my poor mother; shall I never see her again? But you—you will not desert poor Mabel?"

William Thornton kissed the cold cheek of the little girl, for whom he already felt the affection of a brother, saying—

"Do not give way to grief, Mabel; God, who has protected you through such perils, will protect you now, and restore your dear mother to you. Call me brother, for I will show you all the affection a brother can."

"Well, upon my honour," said the Lieutenant, "if this is not a romance I know not what is. Give way, my lads, give way, and let us get on board, and thank our stars that one of those round shot did not stop our logs."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Bill Saunders, pulling the stroke oar, and making the tough ash bend to his powerful arm, whilst muttering to himself, "yes, blow me if I wouldn't be a father to the little thing myself."

CHAPTER V.

IN less than an hour the boat ranged up alongside of the huge Victory, towering above them in the dim light like a mighty fortress, her lofty masts being clearly defined in the clear blue sky. Mabel was in trembling agitation as to what would be done with her, her little heart beating with anxiety.

"You cannot take this child away to-night," said Lieutenant Cooke to our hero, "you had better place her under the care of the steward; he is a steady, middle-aged man, and very kind-hearted. He will put her in his own berth, and to-morrow I will speak to the Admiral about her. It's a strange adventure altogether."

They ascended the side of the ship, Bill Saunders carrying Mabel in his arms as tenderly as an infant. The next moment the little girl found herself standing on the deck of the Victory.

The sight of this monstrous ship, her huge masts towering to the sky, the lights here and there flashing from the battle-lanterns, showed to the astonished child many incomprehensible things. The groups of hardy tars hovering round filled the mind of the young girl with awe, and, trembling and dismayed, she grasped her young protector's arm, and gazed up into his face with her large, intelligent eyes, so full of all her little heart felt, that William Thornton began to feel almost as much as she did.

Lieutenant Cooke returned with the steward.

"Now, my dear child," said the officer, "we place you for the night under the care of the steward, he will show you every attention. He is a father himself, and will feel for you as for one of his own children in a like situation."

"To-morrow," whispered the midshipman, "you will be placed under the care of a kind lady and her daughters."

Poor Mabel, scarcely able to keep from weeping, kissed the midshipman's hand, and bade him good-night in a voice that trembled with emotion, and then Mr. Osborn, the steward, took her under his care.

William Thornton, who never quitted his hold of the casket, proceeded to his berth, and locked it up carefully in his chest. Several of his comrades tormented him with inquiries, but hastily swallowing his supper and a glass of grog, he tumbled into his berth, turning a deaf ear to all their questions.

Midshipmen always sleep under every variety of disturbance, either of body or mind; so William Thornton slept in ten minutes as if he had not had a night's rest for twelve months.

How long he rested he knew not, but he was awake by the

voice of Charles Pole shouting in his ear, "You are wanted, William, in the state room."

"He sprang out of bed, and began dressing as if for a wager.

"Why did you let me sleep so long, Charley, eh?"

"Because Lieutenant Cooke said you wanted a good snooze, as you had none the night before. Why, Thornton, you are likely to turn out quite a hero of romance; there's Saunders been spinning a frightful yarn of your having shot a lot of Republicans and released two princesses, and I don't know how many duchesses, and gained a casket of crown jewels."

"Stuff and non-ense, Charley. I'm off. I'll tell you all about it when I come back. I'll get Saunders' grog stopped for spinning such confounded yarns," and running up the stairs, he made his way towards the Admiral's state room, but O'Loughlin interrupted his course, shaking him by the hand.

"Faith, you're a broth of a boy, William, to be galivanting duchesses and distressed damsels before you are fledged. Go on and prosper, by the time your beard grows you'll do. But be off with you, and mind your P's and Q's before the Admiral."

He next encountered Lieutenant Cooke coming from the Admiral's cabin.

"Well, Thornton," said the Lieutenant, good-humouredly, "how do you feel now? Your little *protégée* has been making a hundred inquiries after you; she is sitting at breakfast with his lordship, who, strange to say, after listening to her account of herself, seems to know a great deal about her family. But go in, they are waiting for you."

The young midshipman entered the Admiral's state room, and at once perceived little Mabel sitting at the breakfast table with the kind-hearted old Admiral. On his entrance she sprang from her chair with an exclamation of joy, and ran to him, taking his hand, saying—

"Oh! dear brother William, how glad I am to see you! if my dear mamma were here how happy I should feel!" and then with childish innocence, quite ignorant of the etiquette between an Admiral and a midshipman, she added, "have you breakfasted? Do come and have some, his lordship is so kind to me, and knows who I am."

William Thornton's face flushed as he looked into the Admiral's fine expressive features, and Lord Hood, who was then in his sixty-ninth year, said with a good-humoured smile—

"Sit down, Master Thornton, sit down; I dare say you have not breakfasted, and I wish to ask you a few questions."

William Thornton sat down next Mabel, eyeing a cold turkey and a ham with a side glance. The steward was in attendance as well as the Admiral's own special attendant, and

very shortly our hero found himself doing justice to fare very rarely in those days exposed to the always voracious appetite of a midshipman.

He then, at the Admiral's request, gave a distinct account of the events of the previous night, to which the Admiral listened with a great deal of interest expressed on his features.

"If I am not very much mistaken," said Lord Hood, "this young lady is the daughter of a once very dear friend, though a much younger man than myself at the time of our intimacy. Do you remember your father, my dear young lady?" asked the Admiral, looking at Mabel.

"No, monsieur," said Mabel; "I only remember my second father, the Duke; he was so good and so kind, and so loved mamma."

"This young lady," continued Lord Hood, is, no doubt, the daughter of Hugh Granby Arden, whose widow I know married a French duke. I believe she was induced to do so under very peculiar circumstances. If I am right, her daughter is a cousin of Master Howard Etherton."

William Thornton started and looked surprised.

"Ah!" said the Admiral, "I see you are not aware that Howard Etherton's father, before he came to the title and estates of the Ethertons, was called Arden; in fact, he was brother to this young lady's father. However, there is no time, neither is this a period for investigating these circumstances. What we must now do, is to procure a suitable asylum for Miss Arden till she can be restored to her mother, or taken to England and placed under the care of her uncle. Therefore, you will at once take her on board the *Thetis* frigate, Captain Timmins has his wife and daughters with him. His good lady will take charge of the child, and provide her with proper garments; one of his girls is about the same age. But stay! I will write a few lines to Captain Timmins; he will remain with the fleet till we take possession of Toulon, which I expect to do in a few days."

The young girl got up, and going over to the Admiral, took his hand, and would have kissed it, but he stooped and pressed her little pale cheek, saying he felt much interested about her, and would, when he had an opportunity, cause inquiries to be made after her mother.

An hour afterwards William Thornton, with Mabel by his side, was steering the *Victory's* gig, pulled by four seamen, for the *Thetis* frigate.

Captain Timmins was an exceedingly kind man, and a thorough good sailor. Nevertheless, we must admit, though nominated captain of his ship, as long as his wife remained on board he was only second in command. He was a small, spare

man, with a mild, patient expression of countenance. Mrs. Captain Timmins (she always insisted on being styled captain, firmly believing that if necessary she could command, and actually work the *Thetis*) was in person the very opposite of her spouse, being tall and portly in person; carried her head high, and always interlarded her conversations with sea terms, not always, however, made use of in the right places. Notwithstanding a few follies of this sort, she was in reality a very kind and generous person; she was not more than five or six-and-thirty, and had a very pleasing countenance. She was also fond of dress.

It was a fine, lovely morning, though somewhat hot, the quarter-decks of the various ships were protected by snow-white awnings. A light westerly breeze played over the bright blue sea, the high land to the south and east of Toulon looked almost within grasp, so clear and fine was the atmosphere.

Mrs. Captain Timmins was walking the quarter-deck with her two daughters, her worthy spouse looking through his glass at the various ships of war.

"What boat is that pulling for us, Timmins?" asked the Captain's lady.

"It's a gig from the *Victory*, with a mid and a little boy in it," said the Captain.

"Bless me!" returned the lady, "what little fellow can that be, the *Victory* has no little boys on board?"

"We shall soon know," replied her spouse, "for here they are alongside."

The ladder was let down, and, leading Mabel by the hand, William Thornton advanced along the deck of the *Thetis*, and touching his cap to the Captain, presented the Admiral's note.

In the meantime the mother and daughters were scrutinising the pale and thin face of poor, sad little Mabel.

"Dear me! Very singular—very; quite romantic. Poor little thing!" muttered Captain Timmins, quite loud enough for his good lady and daughters to hear.

"Mary, my dear," he said aloud, finishing the perusal of the note from the Admiral, "his lordship has sent this little girl," looking at Mabel, "to stay with us for a few days."

"Bless me!" said the Captain's wife, "little girl! Do you mean to say this little thin boy is a girl?—if so, she is badly rigged, not ship-shape."

"Exactly, my dear, exactly. The Admiral wishes you to make her ship-shape, and be kind to her for a few days. She is the daughter of a duchess, and fled from Toulon for her life, and this young gentleman—Master Thornton—was mainly instrumental in saving her life."

"If she were the daughter of a peasant," said the lady

with a grand air, but a most kind look, as she advanced and took Mabel's hand, "being unfortunate, she demands our attention, under the flag of old England. Beg pardon, my dear; do you speak English?" asked Mrs. Captain Timmins, afraid that the fine speech she was about to make would be only for the edification of her husband, the second Lieutenant of the *Thetis*, who was standing near, and a solitary mid, who was regarding Mrs. Captain Timmins at a safe distance, for it must be confessed she kept the mids in awful subjection.

"Oh, yes, madame," said Mabel; "my father was English, and so is mamma."

"Dear me!" said the Captain's wife, surprised, "an English duchess amongst those horrid Republicans; but come into my state room, Angelina and Seraphina are about the same height, and you shall be thoroughly re-fitted and rigged from their stores." Then, looking into the thoughtful, handsome features of William Thornton, whose fine, manly figure struck her at once, she continued: "And you, young gentleman, accompany us. I will order the steward to place refreshments on the table; you will then tell me all about this dear, sensible-looking child, whom I wish to present to you before you leave, in a trim more becoming her age and sex."

Taking Mabel by the hand, the entire party descended into the main cabin. The two girls then took their young companion into their private cabin, and the Captain and his lady, having ordered wine to be placed on the table, requested our hero to satisfy their curiosity respecting his adventures the preceding night.

Whilst the midshipman was satisfying their curiosity, little Mabel was undergoing the necessary metamorphosis from a little boy into a very sweet, interesting little girl. Captain Timmins's two daughters were kind and engaging, and they soon succeeded in winning the confidence of our poor heroine. When introduced into the cabin, all were delighted with the change. Thornton was surprised, and soon after rose to take leave of his little *protégée*. The tears were in Mabel's eyes, but she bore the parting with fortitude, for the midshipman promised to visit her whenever he could. It was not without pain that he kissed her cheek and bade her farewell.

Returning on board the *Victory*, Thornton's comrades gathered around him, fully determined to hear his adventures in full.

"What a racket they all make," observed Master Etherton, with a sneer, "about a brat of a girl, because she calls herself the daughter of a duchess—a French duchess. There are no titles in France now—an adventuress, most likely."

"You are very likely to make a very great mistake, Howard

Etherton," remarked our hero, quietly; "this child is an English girl, and, I am told, bears the same name as your father did before he took that of Etherton."

"What's that you say, Master Thornton?" exclaimed young Etherton, with a start, and changing colour. "My father's name was Arden—as good a name as any in England; but we knew of no other branch of our family bearing that name."

"You are in error, nevertheless, Master Etherton," returned our hero, "for this young lady's mother, the Duchesse de Cou-lancourt, had previously been married to a Mr. Granby Arden; the Admiral knew him intimately, and this little girl we are talking about is his child, Mabel Arden."

"A confounded impostor!" passionately exclaimed young Etherton, with a very pale cheek, and with a vehemence that quite amazed his comrades. "Mr. Granby Arden was my father's brother. He was never married, and died abroad; so that, as I said before, this duchess is an impostor, and her daughter a nameless brat, thrust upon you, seeing what a soft head you possessed," and he laughed mockingly as he said the words.

"I have a great mind to try," said William Thornton, angrily, "whether your head possesses the same qualification that I know your heart does; and if you use such language again in my hearing I will do so, let the consequences be what they may. I have done it once before, but if I have to repeat the lesson you will remember it."

"Be the powers of war! what's all this squabbling amongst you unruly youngsters?" exclaimed Lieutenant O'Loughlin, who, unobserved, had heard the whole dialogue, and who knew very well that if our hero promised a fellow mid a thrashing, he would faithfully stick to his word. Now the Admiral was extremely strict with his midshipmen, and always severely punished both parties who infringed the rules. Fighting was on no account allowed.

"Well, Mr. O'Loughlin," said William Thornton, "what would you have me do? Here is a young lady, protected by the Admiral, who was an intimate friend of her father's, and Master Etherton takes it into his head to call her mother an impostor, and herself a nameless brat."

"Oh, by the Immortals! he'll put his foot in it in earnest," said the Lieutenant; and, turning to the cowed Howard Etherton, he added, "Faith, my lad, you must have more pluck than I ever gave you credit for, thus to give the lie to his lord ship."

"I did not give the lie, Mr. O'Loughlin," said Howard Etherton, "to anybody. I spoke of the best of my belief. I ought to know more of my family than any one here."

"Bedad, you're right there, my lad; for the devil a hair

any one here cares for your family. You may be cousin-German to Master Noah, for all I know; but, if the Admiral knew that a young lady he acknowledges and protects was called an impostor and a brat, be gor! I wouldn't be in your skin for a trifle. But come with me, William; I want to talk to you a bit;" and, taking the midshipman by the arm, he forced him to leave his companions.

At the expiration of two or three days, the British fleet became in a state of intense expectation and excitement, the Admiral having determined to land troops and take possession of the forts commanding the ships in the harbour; for intelligence had arrived of the surrender of Marseilles to General Carteau and his army, whilst Rear-Admiral St. Julien manned the forts to the left of the harbour to oppose the entrance of the British fleet.

Captain Elphinstone, of the *Robust*, was entrusted with the command of the expedition against the forts, with fifteen hundred soldiers and two hundred marines and sailors; Lieutenant O'Loughlin and our hero being permitted by the Admiral to volunteer on that expedition. This was the third time William Thornton was exposed to the fire of an enemy's guns.

It was not without a quicker pulsation of the heart, both from the excitement and the novelty of the affair, that young Thornton leaped from the boat upon the beach, and gazed up at the heights of Toulon that they were to storm, which were full six hundred feet high, rugged, and, to judge from the crumbling of the rocks under their feet, extremely difficult of ascent.

"Hurrah! by dad!" said Lieutenant O'Loughlin to his young companion, the midshipman, "this is one foot forward and two backwards. By the powers! I was near going with that big fellow," as a huge rock gave way under his feet, and thundered down with a cloud of dust upon those following, forcing them to jump nimbly out of the way.

The forts, keeping up an incessant cannonade, killed and wounded many; but still the hardy sailors pressed onwards with incessant cheering; at times gaily laughing as a comrade clutched at a rock which gave way, and he and it rolled down together for several yards.

"You're a trump, William," said the Lieutenant, as a ball tore up the ground within a yard of the daring boy, who, with a bound, sprang over a deep fissure, and waved his cap to some of the tars of the *Victory* to follow, whilst a cloud of dust, stones, and gravel covered the ascending party. But the forts were gallantly stormed, and, after a fierce contest, the British remained in possession.

"You are a brave and gallant lad," said Captain Elphinstone, putting his hand upon young Thornton's shoulder, as,

besmeared with dust and clay, without covering to the head, and his jacket cut in several places by musket balls, he made his appearance before the Captain, having just returned from bearing a message to the officer commanding the troops through a fierce fire of musketry—"Go on as you have begun, and, if God spares you, you will be an honour to your country."

It was a glorious sight, the following day, standing on the ramparts of the fort, to behold the entrance of the British fleet into the outward harbour of Toulon, where they came to an anchor.

CHAPTER VI.

As strict matter of history, we must refrain from recording the events that followed the taking of Toulon by the British. It will be sufficient to say as a midshipman William Thornton so distinguished himself, receiving only one slight wound, that he won the approbation and elicited the admiration of not only Vice-Admiral Lord Hood, but several of the other commanders. During the proceedings, Sir Sidney Smith arrived from Smyrna in a small latine rigged vessel, which he had purchased and manned with over forty British seamen. In storming a fort, the gallantry of William Thornton attracted Sir Sidney, and chancing to render him an important service during the attack, he afterwards solicited the Admiral's permission to retain the midshipman with him; and finally so satisfied was Sir Sidney with his skill and cool courage, that he entrusted the command of his little craft, the *Swallow*, to our hero.

Whilst the British were in possession of Toulon, William Thornton exerted himself to the utmost in endeavours to trace the unfortunate Duchesse de Coulaucourt and Jean Plessis, but in vain. The frigate commanded by Captain Timmins had sailed for Genoa and Malta; but little Mabel had been placed in a cottage without Toulon, under the care of a Royalist family of distinction, a Madame Volney and daughters, who were very kind to her. Our hero visited her several times, and the joy of the little girl was great, indeed, when she beheld him. She wept incessantly after her mother; but though pale and thin, she appeared to be improving in health.

At length the British Admiral found it necessary to evacuate Toulon, and then a scene of indescribable confusion and dismay took place, for the unfortunate Royalists well knew the fate that awaited them from the savage Commissioners of the Republic, and that monster, the deputy Carrier. Madame Volney, her two daughters, and Mabel were received on board the *Robust*,

whilst nearly four hundred fugitives were taken on board the *Princess Royal*, bearing the flag of Rear-Admiral Goodall.

The important service of destroying the ships and magazines was entrusted to Captain Sir Sidney Smith. Our hero and Charles Pole, who accompanied him in the *Swallow* tender, prepared to attend upon Sir Sidney in his fearfully dangerous expedition. It was now the month of December, the weather wild and stormy, the wind north-west and extremely cold.

Sir Sidney, attended by the *Swallow*, three Spanish and three English gunboats—one commanded by Lieutenant O'Loughlin, proceeded to the arsenal to prepare whatever combustible materials were required for the work of devastation he was bent upon. By this time the dockyards had substituted the tricolour for the white cockade.

"By Jove, William," said Charles Pole, "they have turned loose all the galley slaves, and they say there are eight hundred of them; they seem inclined to commence hostilities. Those gentlemen, I suppose, now consider themselves worthy citizens of regenerated France."

"We'll soon show them, Charley, my boy, a sight that will rapidly develop their ideas of liberty and equality;" and forthwith he placed the little tender in a position so that her guns could completely command those on shore. Lieutenant O'Loughlin did the same with his gunboat. This proceeding awed the turbulent galley slaves. Whilst performing this manœuvre, the two boats were exposed to the shots and shells fired from the fort and the neighbouring hills, which Charles Pole declared was throwing a light upon the affair. Now and then the Republicans, posted in the houses, opened fire upon Sir Sidney's party, busy at their operations, which induced our hero to try the effect of one of his guns pointed at the upper storey of a house, the inhabitants of which had been remarkably civil and liberal with their shots. The ball went crashing through the wall, knocking the bricks and mortar in a shower into their faces. This dispersed them in double quick time; but as the shades of night rapidly concealed the movements of those on shore, hundreds came down from the hills, and commenced rapid discharges of musketry.

"Come, my lads," said the *Swallow's* commander, "they are getting ready; just give them a dose of grape."

"Ay, ay, sir; we will pepper the rascals' jackets," said Bill Saunders, applying the match to a gun well pointed, which drove the assailants into the wildest confusion. "Well done, *Swallow*; go it, my lads!" was shouted from some of the party at work ashore; and then the cry arose, "Here's the Vulcan!"

William Thornton turned round, and sure enough beheld

the Vulcan fire-ship, Captain Stacey, entering the basin, towed by several boats.

The Commander placed the Vulcan, in a masterly manner, right across the tier of the men of war. About two hours afterwards the Swallow and the gunboats were ordered to withdraw. They had scarcely receded a few hundred yards, when the trains laid to the different magazines were fired, and the flames ascended in terrific grandeur; but unfortunately the fire-ship, the Vulcan, from an accident, also ignited, and burst into a sheet of flame awful to behold.

The effect of this tremendous light cast over the whole adjoining waters, and lighting up the basin and town near it like noon-day, was extraordinary.

The Republicans, now distinctly seeing the situation of the British, set up furious outcries and shouts of vengeance, opening, at the same time, a terrific fire.

"Well, this is hot work enough, Charley," said our hero, regarding the scene before him with wonder and admiration. They were within fifty yards of the Union gun-boat, Lieutenant O'Loughlin; and astern of her was another gun-boat. So vivid and brilliant were the flames, that every feature of the countenances of those on board the boats were distinctly recognisable. At this moment, as our hero was ordering the crew to drop the trailed latine sail forward, an awful and astounding explosion took place. The Swallow reeled under the shock, apparently lifted from the waters and dashed down again, the crew thrown one over the other. Regaining his feet, bewildered by the shock, William Thornton perceived the Union sinking, and the other gun-boat astern actually in pieces, having been blown into the air.*

Immediately, our hero leaped into the boat they were towing, and reached the side of the sinking gun-boat, picking up Lieutenant O'Loughlin and the rest of the crew, excepting three that had been previously killed.

"Am I all together, William?" exclaimed Lieutenant O'Loughlin; "for, by St. Patrick, I felt as if every limb I had went sporting different ways. What was it—an earthquake?"

"I can't say; it shook us nearly to pieces, dismounted our two guns, and rolled our mainyard out of us."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Sir Sidney Smith, pulling up in an eight-oared gig, "that so few lives have been sacrificed by that horrible explosion."

"What was the cause of the explosion, Sir Sidney?" demanded Lieutenant O'Loughlin, giving himself a shake to satisfy himself that he was all right.

* Fact. See James's "Naval History."

"Those accursed Spaniards," said Captain Smith, "instead of scuttling the *Iris* frigate, set fire to her, and she had some thousand barrels of gunpowder on board. But make way for the basin; we must complete what those Spaniards have only partly begun."

The wind had now lulled, but numerous boats took the vessels in tow; but, on again approaching the basin, they found the boom was thrown across the narrow entrance; and such an incessant volley of musketry was kept up, that they were compelled to abandon the enterprise.

As Charles Pole stood beside young Thornton, he received a musket ball in his left shoulder, that threw him on the deck; and as the midshipman stooped to raise him, O'Loughlin, who was standing directly behind him, received a slight wound on the side of the head.

"Bad cess to you," said the Irishman, as he bound a handkerchief round his head, and assisted William Thornton to raise Charles Pole, whom they wanted to take below; but he would not listen to them. So, stanching the wound as well as they could, he remained on deck.

Having performed all they possibly could, and fired the two seventy-fours, the *Hero* and the *Themistocles*, whose flames added to the horrors of the scene, though Sir Sidney humanely landed all their crews, they were now repairing to rejoin the ships outside, when another terrific explosion took place, by the blowing up of the powder vessel, the frigate *Montreal*. The little *Swallow* and her boats were at that moment in the midst of a horrible shower of falling timbers, which caused the water surrounding them to foam and boil as if a volcano was beneath; yet, singular to relate, they received not the slightest injury.

The scene at this moment was awfully grand and horrible. The two seventy-fours in the inner road were in a pyramid of flame, which lighted up the shores on each side with a vivid distinctness. The heights were crowded with human beings, and the various forts were blazing away, though doing very little damage.

In the midst of this terrific scene, the troops were rapidly evacuating the town, under the able management of Captain Elphinstone. Numbers of boats were towing out the *Courageux*, whilst the British ship the *Conflagration* was set on fire, it being impossible to get her out.

When the unfortunate Royalist inhabitants found that the British were evacuating the town, they deserted their houses and every article they possessed, and a scene commenced which those who witnessed could never forget—a fearful massacre that stained Republican France with shame and reproach to

future times. On the way to the shore the wretched fugitives were cut in two by the balls showered after them—mothers, with infants clinging to their breasts, were cut mercilessly to pieces; neither sex nor age were spared by those inhuman butchers. To the honour of our countrymen, let it be remembered that above 5,640 men, women, and children, were received, and every attention paid them, on board the British vessels of war.

Amidst all these horrors, the little Swallow, Sir Sidney Smith's latine-rigged tender, pursued her way to her anchorage outside, fired upon as it passed by the two forts, Bolognier and Aiguillette; but the shot being ill-directed, did her no mischief.

Thus ended the famous expedition against Toulon. We leave the readers of history to form their own judgment with respect to its utility, and the good it caused to either England or Royalist France.

The following day William Thornton obtained permission to visit little Mabel on board the Robust.

The Robust was commanded by Captain Keith Elphinstone, as brave and kind an officer as any in the fleet. He had noticed the gallantry of our hero the preceding night, and knew that Sir Sidney Smith had taken a most especial liking to him. There were over three hundred unhappy fugitives, deprived of everything but the garments on their backs, on board the Robust; numbers of them were assembled on the decks, gazing upon the land they were soon to leave for ever, others for long years.

Madame Volney, her two daughters, and Mabel Arden, had a cabin to themselves. Madame was the widow of Rear-Admiral Volney, a most determined Royalist, who perished on the first breaking out of the Revolution, whilst in Paris, attending upon the King, whom he earnestly implored to fly and trust himself to the fleet, which, at that time, was almost entirely in favour of the monarch.

Madame Volney, luckily, was received on board the Robust before the evacuation of the town, and was able to secure a considerable amount of property in ready money, many valuables and jewels.

She knew the Duchesse de Coulaucourt by name, having heard of her misfortunes and persecutions in Lyons; she therefore gladly and kindly received her daughter under her protection. Both her own daughters were grown up—one was seventeen the other twenty—both amiable and kind-hearted girls.

It is not very often that midshipmen are noticed by Captains of seventy-four gun ships, but Captain Elphinstone was an exception. He was remarkably kind to all his young gentlemen. Prepossessed in favour of our hero, he received him with

great cordiality, spoke of the proceedings of the previous night, and congratulated him on his singular escape from the blowing-up of the *Iris*. Our hero answered all Captain Elphinstone's questions modestly, but with a manly, open manner that greatly pleased him. The Captain was not aware that the little girl under the protection of Madame Volney was English. William Thornton, therefore, gave the Captain a brief outline of her unfortunate story, and the manner in which he had become acquainted with her.

"Oh! I understand now," said Captain Elphinstone; "you, then, are the midshipman that accompanied Lieutenant Cooke into the town, and who behaved so well on that occasion; I heard that a midshipman from the *Victory* did accompany the Lieutenant, but I did not hear the name."

After some more questions on the subject of little Mabel, he was permitted to descend to the cabin to see her.

As he had several times visited Madame Volney when residing in her cottage without the town, he was no stranger.

As usual, the little girl flew to his side, embracing him with the warmest affection, looking up into his handsome features, with tears in her eyes, saying—

"Oh, dear brother! how rejoiced I am to see you alive and well. All last night I could not close my eyes; the terrible noise of the firing, the frightful glare of the flames, seen from our cabin windows, terrified us to death; and I guessed you were in the midst of it all, and I prayed that you might be spared."

"That is quite true, Mr. Thornton," said Madame Volney, with a sigh; "none of us could sleep, or indeed lie down; the thoughts of the horrors enacting on shore, the misery we knew our poor defenceless countrymen and women were suffering, made our hearts ache; and then, when the boats came alongside with the unhappy fugitives, and we heard their cries and lamentations, our sufferings nearly equalled theirs."

"This dear child did nothing but think of you," said Mademoiselle Agatha Volney, the youngest daughter, a very pretty and engaging girl, and who looked upon our hero with surprise and admiration, that one so young and so gentle in manner and appearance could be mixed up amid such horrible scenes as the preceding night must have witnessed.

"I fear indeed," observed our hero, "that hundreds of unfortunate Royalists suffered last night, and most unfortunate it was that we were forced to evacuate the town; but with the force remaining at the disposal of the Admiral, it was utterly impossible, I understand, to hold the place."

The conversation then turned upon the future proceedings of the British fleet, and what was to become of the ill-fated

fugitives on board the British ships. Madame Volney declared it was her intention to procure a passage to London in some merchant vessel, and proposed to our hero that Mabel should continue with her till she should be claimed by her relatives in England.

Poor Mabel could scarcely refrain from tears.

"Is there no hope, then," she anxiously exclaimed, "of hearing some intelligence of my beloved mamma? Oh! are we never to meet again?"

"Do not grieve, dear Mabel," soothingly urged William Thornton; "though we may be baffled here in gaining some trace of her, yet depend on it Jean Plessis, faithful and devoted as he is, will never rest till he comes on the track of those who carried her off. She will know you are safe, and taken to your relatives in England, and, when released herself, she will no doubt seek to reach England to rejoin you."

Mabel listened and sighed. It was a bad prospect for the poor girl; and when William Thornton kissed her, and, with great affection in his manner and tone, bade her and Madame Volney farewell for a time, she burst into a passionate flood of tears, and, running into her berth, hid her face upon her pillow.

"She is a most sensitive child," said Madame Volney's daughter; "and though only twelve years old, has all the thoughts and feelings of a far maturer age."

"Well, I trust and hope," said the midshipman, "that time will do its usual work, and reduce the violence of her present feelings. She is very young; and if her relatives receive her kindly, it will tend greatly to obliterate the memory of the past."

CHAPTER VII.

A DAY or two after our hero's visit to Mabel, he received orders to attend the Admiral, who required his presence in the cabin.

Lord Hood was alone, sitting at a table covered with papers, letters, and dispatches. His Lordship looked up, pointed with the pen in his hand to a seat, and then finished the letter he was employed upon when our hero entered. His secretary, the moment before, had left the cabin.

After a few minutes, Lord Hood looked up, and laying down his pen, said—

"Well, Master Thornton, how is your little *protégée*, Miss Arden?"

"Greatly grieved, my Lord; she continues to bewail the disappearance of her mother, and takes her lonely situation much to heart."

"Yes, poor child!" said the Admiral in a kind, thoughtful tone, "she must feel her orphan state. I am interested in her, for her father did me a great service at one time—as important a service as one man can render another; I would, therefore, befriend his child."

"Pardon me, my Lord," timidly observed our hero; "but Master Howard Etherton declares that Mr. Hugh Granby Arden, his uncle, was never married, and died abroad."

"Then he states that which is not the fact," returned Lord Hood, sternly; "at least, with respect to his not being married. I was aware he died abroad—he died in France. However, I sent for you to let you know that I have appointed Lieutenant O'Loughlin to take the command of the French eighteen-gun corvette Babet, captured in Toulon. He is to take her to England, and will sail in company with the other captured ships. This is, of course, only a temporary command, and I will also place you in her."

William Thornton's cheek flushed with delight, as he started from his seat with surprise.

"The Babet, however," continued Lord Hood, "has scarcely half her proper number of guns, for she was fitting out when seized; and her complement of men must be small, for we cannot spare more. I have communicated with Admiral Volney's widow, and she is quite rejoiced to take her passage in the Babet to England; Miss Arden will thus be protected and taken care of, and you will have the satisfaction of personally seeing her restored to her relatives, which I am sure will gratify you exceedingly."

"Indeed, my Lord," put in the midshipman with enthusiasm, "you could not confer upon me a greater favour, and I trust I shall be worthy of your Lordship's generous kindness."

"You have behaved very well, young man," said the Admiral, kindly, "and Sir Sidney Smith is highly pleased with your gallantry and coolness in that daring enterprise of his; he offers to take you with him, but I think you will prefer the appointment and trust I now propose to you."

"For little Mabel Arden's sake, my Lord, infinitely. Nevertheless, I feel exceedingly grateful to Captain Sir Sidney Smith for his offers of service. He said something to me yesterday of this, and, not knowing your Lordship's generous intentions, I expressed myself delighted with the promotion he promised me."

"Well, your absence will only be for the voyage," said Lord Hood; "you will rejoin this ship by the first vessel coming out, as will also Lieutenant O'Loughlin."

After a few more observations and directions from the Admiral, William Thornton retired, greatly delighted, and with

permission to proceed to the *Robust*, to impart the intelligence he had received to Madame Volney and Mabel Arden.

Whilst William Thornton was paying his visit on board the *Robust*, Master Howard Etherton was extremely busy writing a long letter home to go along with the Admiral's dispatches to England. As this letter reached England some time before the arrival of Mabel Arden, owing to circumstances that will be hereafter explained, we must request our readers to follow us to the shores of England, in order that we may introduce to their notice the family of Master Howard Etherton, as they will figure in this narrative rather prominently.

Howard Etherton's father, before he succeeded to the baronetcy and estates of the Ethertons, was a Captain Arden. He was a younger brother, his elder brother dying abroad, it was supposed, without heirs; indeed, it was not generally known that he was ever married. Godfrey Arden, the younger brother, therefore, as next heir, took possession of the estates. Etherton Manor was a very fine mansion, situated in a richly wooded and much-admired part of Hampshire, a few miles from Hurst Castle, and commanding an extensive view not only over the estuary of Southampton water, but also over the narrow sea dividing England from its garden—the Isle of Wight. At this period of our story Sir Godfrey Etherton was in his fiftieth year; he had two sons and seven daughters; his lady was some two or three years his junior. She was the only daughter of a tolerably rich slop-seller in Portsmouth. When Sir Godfrey married her, he was only a poor lieutenant in the navy, who was quite willing to overlook his wife's want of birth in consideration of five thousand pounds hard cash, which he received with her.

At that time there was a very remote chance indeed of the poor lieutenant succeeding to the Etherton estates.

When Mrs. Arden became Lady Etherton she was exceedingly anxious to forget that her father, at this period gathered to his fathers, was ever called a slop-seller. All mention of her parents and relatives was forbidden. In person she was short and robust; she dressed richly and gaudily, but without the slightest taste, notwithstanding all the efforts of her well-educated but haughty and imperious daughters.

As Captain Arden, of the *Dauntless*, the Baronet was a morose and exacting commander, a man without one particle of feeling. It is quite sufficient to say he was universally detested by both officers and crew.

After succeeding to the baronetcy and the estates, he retired into private life, into which he carried all his morose and unamiable qualities. Always dissatisfied, he declared everything went wrong with him. His eldest daughter married, for love, a poor subaltern, and was banished the paternal mansion—no

great punishment. His eldest son remained a gentleman, with nothing to do but to spend in dissipation and excesses of all kinds five times the amount allowed him yearly by his father; the consequences were that he became deeply involved in debt. The youngest son, Howard Etherton, the father's favourite, was, as our readers know, a midshipman on board the *Victory*, expecting, through his father's interest and position, rapid promotion, as soon as his six years' probation had run out.

Howard Etherton's disposition and nature were utterly unprincipled; he was also, for one so young, parsimonious to a degree; though handsomely allowed by his father, he hoarded all he possibly could spare to suit his own purposes hereafter. He, as well as the rest of the family, knew that his father came into the estates, from the fact of his elder brother having died without heirs; he also knew that there were rumours of his uncle in his youth having carried off a young lady somewhere in Italy, her parents opposing their union; but as years passed over, and no tidings of him reached his family, till an authentic account of his death became circulated, and afterwards fully proved, the previous account of his marriage was considered a mere rumour; and as neither wife nor child made their appearance, Captain Arden's claims were undisputed.

When Howard Etherton therefore heard on board the *Victory* that the Duchesse de Coulaucourt was positively, before she married the Duke, the widow of Mr. Granby Arden, and that a son and daughter by her first husband were living, he became, as we have stated, startled and confounded; for if such was positively the case, and could be proved, his father had no longer a just claim to either the baronetcy or the estates. But when he heard that Mabel Arden had declared that her brother was cruelly murdered at Lyons, he felt singularly relieved. Still, the knowledge that Mabel would be entitled to a very handsome fortune out of the estate especially provided by settlements and deeds appertaining to the Etherton estates, rankled in his heart and ill-regulated mind.

It was the intelligence, therefore, that he heard on board the *Victory*, that he sent in his letter to his father.

He also found vent for his hatred to young Thornton, of whom he spoke in the bitterest terms, imputing to his officiousness the recovery of Mabel Arden.

Sir Godfrey Etherton in his own mind always believed that his brother had eloped with a young lady from some city in Italy, but whether he married her or not he could not discover; neither, strange to say, could he find out the name of the young lady. There was a mystery enveloping the whole transaction that baffled him.

Of all his family, his wife was his only confidant; to her he

confided all his thoughts and conjectures, though she was the very last person, to judge by appearance and manner, that he would seek, though she was his wife, to repose confidence in for she was the very reverse of himself in everything ; but the secret was, she was really attached to him, and he to her : at least he liked her as much as his selfish, cold nature would permit him to like anything.

Sir Godfrey was no schemer or plotter ; he had nothing of the villain about him ; had his brother married and left a child, a boy or a girl, he would have made no attempt to deprive either of their just rights. The morning he received his son's letter he was sitting at breakfast with his lady and four of their daughters, two of them not out of their teens ; the other two were of the respective ages of seventeen and nine. On opening the letter to satisfy Lady Etherton's eager inquiries concerning her son, Sir Godfrey's eye caught the name of Arden.

"God bless my soul!" he exclaimed, turning somewhat pale, and, indeed, no little agitated ; "how extraordinary !"

"Nothing has occurred to our Henry, I trust?" said Lady Etherton, anxiously. "I always said it was a sad thing to expose our boy with his expectations."

"His expectations!" repeated Sir Godfrey, sarcastically ; and then added, "No, Jane ; nothing has happened to him. I will read you his letter presently."

The daughters, though no doubt as curious as their mother, took the hint, and left the room.

"You look disturbed, Godfrey," said Lady Etherton. "What can Howard have written to vex you?"

"Well, the intelligence is not perhaps as bad as I thought," said Sir Godfrey, drawing his breath as if relieved, and laying down the letter, having read it carefully through. "Do you know, Jane, that my suspicions that my brother Granby had married, are turning out correct?"

"Heavens! What do you mean?" exclaimed Lady Etherton, in her turn looking agitated. "Has he left any children?"

"He did leave a boy and a girl."

"Merciful goodness," interrupted the Baronet's wife ; "this is dreadful! We shall——"

"Nay," interrupted Sir Godfrey ; "you are frightening yourself without cause. I was startled myself ; but the son, it seems, was beheaded."

"Thank God! — that is — hem — really, Godfrey, you, you startled me—I do not mean to thank God that the unfortunate boy has lost his head, which is very singular ; but I mean it would be very terrible for us to lose the title and estate, and with such a family of daughters."

"Yes; it would be much better that I never had succeeded to it than that alternative; for by continuing in the service I should by this time have been a Rear-Admiral."

"Thank God it is as it is; but how is it, then, with respect to the daughter; and where is Granby Arden's wife?"

"I will read you the letter," said the Baronet, "and then you will know as much as I do;" and he did so.

Lady Etherton listened eagerly. When he had concluded, she said, with some bitterness—

"Who is this youngster, William Thornton, who has made himself so conspicuous, and who, Howard says, is his bitter enemy?"

"Pooh!" returned the Baronet, contemptuously. "Boys' enmity—a rival midshipman. I kept those troublesome urchins in their proper place when I commanded the Dauntless. But who this William Thornton is, it matters not; he is a midshipman, and, as Howard says, the natural son of one of Lord Hood's coxwains. I saw his name mentioned in the paper as a very high-spirited boy, and that he was entrusted by Captain Sir Sidney Smith with the command of a little tender on the night they burned the French ships in Toulon—a miserable failure that affair. But with respect to this Mabel Arden, whom we may expect in England shortly, we must afford her our protection. The worst of it is, she is entitled to twenty thousand pounds fortune out of the estates when she becomes of age. Had her brother lived, the blow would have been an awful one, to lose title and estate, and forced to live upon a captain's half-pay, or go to sea again."

Lady Etherton looked startled.

"I hope—that is—I wonder if the boy really lost his head. Strange accident, was it not, Godfrey?"

"Accident!" repeated the Baronet, looking at his spouse rather contemptuously. "Why, Jane, what are you thinking of? You forget they are taking heads off in France at this moment for mere amusement; the boy must somehow or other have got mixed up in their bloody orgies, and they guillotined him. His mother, the Duchess of Coulancourt, it seems, fell into the hands of the Revolutionists in Toulon, and may at this moment be no more. There's a strange mystery about my mother's marriage, and his widow afterwards marrying a French duke."

"How old is this little girl you expect to arrive in England?" questioned Lady Etherton.

"Howard says about eleven or twelve; a young delicate thing, not likely to live over the voyage."

"If she does live," said Lady Etherton, thoughtfully, "she would make a right good match for Howard, wouldn't she?"

"You are early in your matrimonial speculations, Jane," said the Baronet; "but you are not far out, from causes which you know. To have to pay over that twenty thousand pounds, and interest, now, would be inconvenient. The interest due on it, and her long minority, would make her a very eligible match for a younger son."

"Very, indeed!" said Lady Etherton. "Would it not be as well to withdraw Howard from the navy, and let the young people grow up together?"

"I would not remove him from his profession at this period on any account. Charlotte's marriage with young Lord Coldburgh will cost me ten thousand pounds; and if I have to pay up this twenty thousand pounds and interest at once to the trustees, if there are any, of Miss Arden, it will make a sum of thirty thousand pounds altogether; this will encumber the property for a time, and five other daughters to be disposed of. I am willing to make this sacrifice for Charlotte, for Lord Coldburgh, as to rank and influence, is a first-rate match."

"Charlotte is a lucky girl," said the mother, with a pleased look. Now, whether she herself thought so or not, will appear hereafter.

Having thus given our readers a brief outline of the Etherton family, of which our heroine, Mabel Arden, was expected to become a member on her arrival in England, we will return to our hero on board the *Victory*, which, still with the British fleet, lay off Toulon.

CHAPTER VIII.

"You are one of fortune's favourites," said Charles Pole to William Thornton, who was taking leave of his comrades on board the *Victory*, previous to his departure the following morning, for the *Babet* corvette was quite ready for sea. Madame Volney and daughters, and Mabel Arden, were on board, waiting the signal to weigh.

"I wish in my heart you were coming with us, Charles," said our hero, warmly pressing his friend's hand; "it is the only drawback to the pleasure I anticipate; but I shall, please the fates, soon rejoin you."

"Ah," said several of the midshipmen, with lengthened faces "you will have such a jolly life of it, with O'Loughlin for a skipper—lots of good things, and no nip cheese to stint your allowance."

"Never look down-hearted," said our hero; "you will all have a turn of luck by-and-by."

"To the devil with such luck!" said Howard Etherton, with a sneer. "I don't see much to grieve after; a few weeks' liberty is the most you can make of it, with a chance of being captured on the way. The inside of a French prison would be a nice variety;" and not wishing to exchange a good-bye with his fellow mid, Howard Hetherton walked away.

"Well, here's success to you, William, and a safe passage, lots of fun, and a quick return to us," said William Thornton's friends; and down went bumpers of purser's champagne.

An hour afterwards William Thornton was put on board the *Babet*, where he found his friend Lieutenant O'Loughlin, the appointed commander of the corvette, walking the quarter deck, enjoying a glorious sunset and a pipe.

"Well, my lad, bade them all good bye? There's Madame below, and her daughters, quite anxious that you should take your coffee with them; and your little *protégée* popping up her head every now and then to see if you have arrived. Be the piper of Moll Kelly, you're a broth of a boy with the fair sex; go on and prosper; faith, I think you might turn Turk with advantage."

William Thornton laughed, saying:

"I never knew you to object to the company of a pretty face; but as you are my commander now, I must be careful what I say."

"Oh, be gor, if you go to studying manners and touching hats to Patrick O'Loughlin, be the powers, I'll shut you up from the women altogether. But tell me, William, how long will it take you to teach me a few French sentences, such as—hem—as, 'I love you,' and all that kind of thing; for, confound it, I don't know a word of their parley-vous, and that's a sweet creature below."

"Oh," said William Thornton, with a smile, "the admiral's widow—ah, so she is; best tempered woman possible."

"Devil take your impudence; you don't want to make love to the whole three, do you; and leave me the mother, eh?"

"Make love," said the hero, very demurely; "who ever heard of a midshipman making love? but I suppose it's Mademoiselle Agatha's eyes that have scorched your *tinder* heart; faith, O'Loughlin, it has had so many sparks applied to it, that one would imagine it was past kindling again. I'll tell you what I will do for you, I'll set to work at once to teach Mademoiselle Agatha English; I will engage to make her decline the verb 'I love' before a week's out."

"Oh, by St. Peter! the devil doubt ye, my lad; but I'll try that myself. Stick to the little thing, with her fine dark eyes like two diamonds. She'll make a tidy craft by the time the cat's done cleaning your chin, and I'll lend you a razor then."

William Thornton laughed, and dived down the companion, and soon found himself seated at table beside his serious-faced little *protégée*, and the two lively, pretty daughters of Madame Volney.

"So we sail to-morrow?" said Agatha Volney, fixing her laughing blue eyes on the midshipman; "you seem quite elated at quitting the *Victory* for this little ship."

"You must remember," said our hero, "that the *Victory* has not the attractions on board that the *Babet* has. This little voyage will be quite a charming episode in a poor midshipman's career. One to be remembered with delight."

Agatha's pretty face coloured a little; she certainly looked pleased. She was the same age as young Thornton, and he, for his years, looked exceedingly manly.

Poor little Mabel was still pale and thoughtful; the image of her fond and beautiful mother was ever before her, and now on the point of leaving the land that contained her cherished parent pining in captivity; alas! perhaps dead, the poor child felt her situation keenly. To William Thornton she turned for consolation; and when near him, and listening to his kind and soothing words, she appeared to droop less.

"So we sail with a whole fleet of ships, Master Thornton," said Madame Volney.

"Yes, madame," said our hero; "most of the vessels taken in Toulon sail in company. We shall have that magnificent ship, the *Commerce de Marseilles*, hundred and twenty guns, and the *Puissant*, seventy-four; and the *Perle* and *Arethusa* frigates, and several smaller craft; there is not much danger of capture in such company."

Lieutenant O'Loughlin, or rather Captain O'Loughlin, entered the cabin, making a low bow to the party, and stammering out a mixture of French and English, which he intended for "Pray do not disturb yourself;" but the two girls insisted upon the really handsome and dashing looking sailor sitting down and joining them.

This he did, desiring the midshipman to say, that he was proud of having such a freight on board the *Babet*, and that he hoped they would have a brush with a French corvette, or even a frigate, just to show them how devoted he was to the service of the young ladies.

"I must alter the last part of your speech, Captain," said our hero, laughing; "you must include the mother."

"Well," said Madame Volney, with a smile, for she understood English tolerably, on William Thornton's literally translating the Captain's speech; "we feel highly the compliment; but for our own parts, we should prefer his devotion without the brush with the corvette."

"Be St. Patrick! the eyes of those girls so bewilder me," said O'Loughlin, "that I forgot what I came down here for. Here, look at this;" and he pulled a very soiled and sealed note from his waistcoat; "a fishing boat with two men in her pulled up alongside just after you went down, and saying something or other I did not understand, handed up this note. I called out to them to hold on till I sent for you to speak to them; but, confound their impudence, they did not seem to understand me. What's that on the back? it's not English."

"No," said William Thornton, looking at the writing, "by Jove, it is directed to me!"

"You," said O'Loughlin; "that's not your name at the back; I could make that out if it were."

"No, it's not my name; but you see it says, 'To the young midshipman on board the Babet,' and that's me, unless you choose to change ranks with me."

"Upon my conscience I'd have no objection, if I got the gift of the language by the change. But what the deuce is in it; are there any girls ashore looking after you?"

"No, I think not," said our hero, laughing; and begging Madame's and the young ladies' pardon, he opened the note. But the name of Jean Plessis at the bottom made him say out loud, and in French:

"Mabel, this is from Jean Plessis!"

The child gave a cry of joy and clasped her hands, whilst the Misses Volney started up with joyful exclamations. Captain O'Loughlin rubbed his head, uttered an anathema against the French language, and looked at Agatha Volney's handsome features, lighted up with the glow of expectation, as she said:

"Oh, dear! perhaps we shall hear something of this dear child's mother. Do read it out, Mr. Thornton."

This our hero did as follows:

"MONSIEUR,—

"To relieve the anxiety Mademoiselle Arden must feel concerning her mother, I contrive, though at great risk, to send this to you, having found out that she and you are on board the Babet.

"The Duchess is *quite safe* and well, I dare not write more, and with the blessing of God we may be in England as soon as your ship. I cannot venture to put more on paper—tell Mademoiselle to keep up her spirits, and all will be well.

"JEAN PLESSIS."

The overjoyed child threw her arms round Agatha Volney's neck and burst into tears, exclaiming:

"Oh! dear, dear mamma is safe and well, and that dear

good Jean Plessis, how I love him for his faith and devotion ! ”

Agatha kissed the little girl fondly, which proceeding seemed to affect the worthy Commander of the *Babet*, who would willingly have offered his service for a similar demonstration on the part of the fair French girl ; but the loud report of a cannon roused him from his reverie, and caused him to rush upon deck. William Thornton followed. There had sprung up a fine breeze out of the gulf, and the gun was to call attention to the signals.

“ Ah ! I thought so,” said Captain O’Loughlin ; “ the signal to get under weigh. Here’s a glorious breeze. We shall now see what this craft can do, for I have a very good opinion of her ; she has fine beam, carries square yards, and has a very clean entrance.”

In a few minutes the boatswain’s whistle called the crew into action ; there were but forty-two men, officers included, on board. Although an eighteen-gun corvette, she had at this time only eight twelve-pounder carronades mounted ; the rest of the guns were below ; and as the *Babet* was very short handed, and required some considerable repair before fit for actual service in the British navy, Lieutenant O’Loughlin’s directions were to take her to Plymouth, and avoid any encounter with the enemy’s cruisers, if compatible with honour to do so.

It was a dark night when the various vessels sailing in company got under weigh. It was not intended or expected that they should keep together after sailing, the disparity of their size and equipment putting that out of the question. Their restrictive orders were to make the best of their way to an English port, excepting two or three, which were bound to Rochford, to land the Royalist fugitives from Toulon.

With the wind at north-west, the *Babet*, under topsails and top-gallant sails, went rapidly through the water. The log was tried towards morning ; she was then going better than twelve knots, which Captain O’Loughlin thought very good work, considering the breeze and the sail set.

It was the latter end of December ; it therefore did not surprise the Commander of the corvette, that as the sun rose on the following morning the gulf wind fell, and the appearance of the sky showed signs of heavy weather from the south-west. They had run during the night out of sight of land and from all the vessels, save the huge *Commerce de Marseilles* and the two frigates, which were in sight about three leagues ahead.

Before mid-day there was a short calm, with a long swell from the south and east.

Madame Volney and her daughters, and Mabel, came on deck, though it was extremely cold ; but, like all young voyagers

on the vasty deep, they paid their initiate to its power, by being sick all night, and anxious for fresh air.

"I am sorry," said William Thornton, "to see that you and the young ladies have been suffering, Madame Volney."

Poor Mabel looked even paler than usual.

"It is a suffering few escape," said Madame Volney, "but I suppose it is what we must endure for a few days; indeed, very likely, if we have a good passage, we shall not have time to become good sailors."

"I trust you will not suffer beyond to-day, or to-morrow at furthest," said our hero.

"We must have sailed very fast in the night, Mr. Thornton; I see no land anywhere. What an immense ship that is away before us!" said Agatha Volney, trying to shake off the disagreeable sensation of giddiness she experienced.

"That is the Commerce de Marseilles, and most likely the Puissant and the Perle are with her."

Madame Volney sighed, saying—

"The Puissant was the last ship my noble but unfortunate husband commanded; it is somewhat strange that we should be proceeding to England with her."

Captain O'Loughlin joined the party, and made an attempt to express his sorrow at seeing them all looking so pale; but as the day wore on, and a light breeze sprung up from the south, they all began to get gradually much better.

Little Mabel seemed to regain some little portion of spirit; the news of her mother's safety and the prospect of meeting her in England cheered her. And as the sickness wore off—for sometimes children suffer less than adults—she felt a desire to walk about the deck, William Thornton aiding and assisting her, and chatting to her of her future prospects, making the day pass pleasantly enough; the Babet working to windward under a light breeze, but with a very threatening sky, heavy masses of clouds rising rapidly in the south-east quarter.

After the ladies had retired, our hero and his Commander kept pacing the deck in conversation.

"What are you to do with your little charge," demanded Captain O'Loughlin, "when we reach Plymouth? I had not time to ask you before sailing."

"Why, you see," returned the midshipman, "Lord Hood had a long conference with Howard Etherton, which satisfied his lordship that Howard's father, Sir Godfrey Etherton, was little Mabel's uncle. Though Howard did all he could to persuade the Admiral that Mr. Granby Arden was never married—but his lordship said he knew better—he did not pretend to say that he knew he left children, but he felt convinced that the contents of the casket given me by Mabel's mother would

sufficiently explain the matter. 'You are very young, Master Thornton,' said the Admiral to me afterwards, 'to be concerned in an affair of this sort; but as it appears the wish of the Duchesse de Coulaucourt that, young as you are, you should have the care of this child and this casket, I will not alter her desires. When you reach Plymouth or Portsmouth, proceed to London, take the casket, which is sealed, to Mr. Joseph Stanmore, my solicitor, and a most eminent man; give him also this letter,' handing one to me, 'and then be guided by him.' Thus you see, O'Loughlin, my course is properly chalked out. Mr. Stanmore lives in Cavendish Square; so, leaving Mabel with Madame Volney, I shall go up to London as soon as we reach Plymouth."

Captain O'Loughlin seemed buried in thought; at last he looked up, saying—

"You are in love with Agatha Volney!"

The midshipman burst into so loud and hearty a laugh, that it startled the man at the wheel:—

"Well, upon my honour, Captain O'Loughlin——"

"Oh, bother with your Captain! If you go on with any more of that nonsense, I must give you up. Call me Patrick or O'Loughlin, but to the deuce with my captainship! What did you laugh in that manner for? by Jove, you shook all the wind out of the royals!"

"The idea of a boy, scarcely seventeen, in love with a full-grown Demoiselle Française, of nineteen! You are dreaming, or, what's deuced more likely, you are in love with her yourself."

"Devil a doubt of it, my lad, I confess; but you look so sweet at one another. Isn't there the other little girl? She will, in four or five years, be tolerably good looking; she has fine eyes, at all events. She will never forget you, and, by Jove, you may depend on it, she will have lots of cash!"

"By Jove, O'Loughlin, you are pitching into the future, like a jolly boat in a head sea—manufacturing a wife for me five or six years off. I don't intend," continued our hero, "to get married till I am a post captain—perhaps an admiral."

"Tare and nouns! If you wait till you are an admiral, with perhaps a leg and an arm or an eye less than your complement, she must be a tidy craft that will take you in tow. Hollo! There's a squall!"

As he spoke, the boatswain's whistle was heard, the men hurrying up, whilst O'Loughlin gave rapid orders to take in the royals, and furl the top-gallant sails, for the ship heeled over to a very sudden and singular kind of squall, that struck the water within a few yards of them. In a few minutes the sea was feather white, squall after squall coming over its hitherto

tranquil surface. But the Babet was rapidly got under double-reefed topsails, and top-gallant masts housed, and was standing away to the westward, close hauled.

"By St. Patrick, how suddenly this gale has come on," observed Captain O'Loughlin to the first mate, William Thornton having gone below to reassure their passengers, who were alarmed by the sudden, and, indeed, violent heeling over of the corvette.

"Yes, sir," returned the mate, an old and experienced sailor; "but common enough in the Mediterranean. I should not be surprised if it increased to a very heavy gale; it's looking exceedingly black to windward."

"She's a steady craft under canvas, Mr. Holder."

"Yes, sir; but our rigging is all new, so we must be tender, or our masts may suffer."

"It would be well to get up some preventive back stays, and take in the lee rigging, which I see is as slack as a purser's liberality."

As the night, which was intensely dark, advanced, the gale increased to a hurricane. Captain O'Loughlin, on consulting his charts, found they were heading towards the Spanish coast. So rapidly had the sea increased, that before morning they were preparing to heave the ship to, when the man forward sung out—

"Ship right ahead."

The next moment, as Captain O'Loughlin and our hero were anxiously looking out, a huge ship was dimly seen, rising on the top of a monstrous billow. She was lying to.

"It is the French ship, the Commerce de Marseilles," said William Thornton, as the man at the wheel was ordered to keep the Babet a point or two to the nor'-west; and then she was hove to, just as a gun was fired from the Commerce de Marseilles, and the night signal displayed.

This was promptly answered by the crew of the corvette, and her name given; and then all relapsed into silence, excepting the roar of the gale through the rigging, and the breaking surges as they dashed against the side of the ship. Still the gale increased; and when the grey light of morning broke over the storm-tossed deep, they could distinctly make out three ships, not half a mile from each other, all lying co.

CHAPTER IX.

THIS was the memorable storm on the 28th of December, 1793. So tremendous became the hurricane before sun-set of the day following its commencement, that the *Babet* became literally buried in the tremendous seas. She had lost her bowsprit, close to the stem, a great portion of her bulwarks, and all her boats, and just as night set in, a sea of terrific bulk and fury broke on her larboard bow ; fortunately, it was expected, and the crew saved themselves from being washed overboard by timely precaution ; but for several moments all thought the corvette was sinking, when a tremendous crash took place, and both main and fore masts went over the side, a furious sea striking her at the same time, fortunately driving her right round before the tempest.

Holding on by ropes stretched across the decks, Captain O'Loughlin and William Thornton called out to the crew to cut away the wreck with their axes, and two men were lashed at the wheel to keep her steady before the storm.

"Be St. Patrick, William," said the Commander, giving himself a shake, "it was nearly up with us. We shall drive ashore before morning, I fear."

"God forbid !" said our hero, thinking of the terrified and dismayed females fastened down below. "She is quite tight yet, the carpenter says ; very little water in her."

"So far so well," said the Captain ; "but all depends upon the distance we are from the land. This morning, you know, I calculated as the wind blew that we were about two-and-forty miles from the Spanish coast, in a direct line. As we are going now we shall run aground somewhere between Pralamos and Ampurias, for the force of the hurricane came from the east and south."

A change was coming over the elements as he spoke ; a furious deluge of rain, accompanied with continued peals of thunder took place. Gradually the wind began to lull, and before an hour was out, a ceaseless torrent of rain was the only remains of the tempest, excepting, of course, the sea, which for several hours would remain in a terribly disturbed state. The great danger to be apprehended in the cessation of the hurricane was the *Babet's* getting broadside on to the sea, in her perfectly powerless state.

"We shall have the gale out from the Gulf of Lyons before morning," observed Captain O'Loughlin to our hero. "We are in a nice mess. You may manage to get down below, however, and see how our poor passengers get on ; they must be awfully frightened."

"Sad loss, our masts," remarked the midshipman, whilst some of the crew were removing the tarpauling over the companion.

"Faith, it's just what I expected," said O'Loughlin. "Look at the hasty way we were fitted out; and yet there was no help for it. In the confusion, we were over-masted, too, and the rigging quite new. I'll venture to say many of the smaller craft foundered in the gale—the heaviest I ever remember."

The corvette still plunged and rolled tremendously; but, fortunately, they contrived to keep her before the seas, which, owing to the continued and heavy rain, were falling fast.

William Thornton made his way into the principal cabin of the corvette. Notwithstanding everything had been secured in the best possible manner, many things had broken adrift and lay scattered over the floor; a swinging lamp threw a feeble gleam over the handsome saloon. The females were in their private cabins, but Madame Volney's attendant, a woman who had lived with her many years, and was greatly attached to her, answered our hero's summons at the door.

"Oh, mon Dieu, monsieur!" said Janette, "we thought every moment would be our last. Are we going into port, for we appear quieter?"

"We are running in for a port, Mrs. Janette," said William Thornton, "and the hurricane has ceased; so tell the ladies they have nothing further to fear. In an hour or two the sea will be comparatively smooth."

"Is there any one hurt on board, Mr. Thornton?" inquired madame; "we heard such a terrible crash during the night, as if the masts were being carried away."

"I am happy to say, madam, that there was no one hurt; but I fear you all suffered a great deal by the rolling of the ship."

"Oh! we fastened ourselves into our berths, and escaped suffering only from intense anxiety, which we are greatly obliged to you for relieving, Mr. Thornton."

The midshipman returned upon deck, the rain still falling heavily, but there was not a breath of wind, though vivid flashes of lightning at intervals threw a bright gleam over the heaving waters, but unaccompanied by thunder.

"In an hour or so it will be daylight, William," said Captain O'Loughlin. "We must try and get up some of the spare sails; luckily our spare spars have escaped. We may rig up a couple of jury-masts and get to Gibraltar with them, unless the gale sets in again. I have no faith in those sudden lulls."

"We might make Barcelona or Carthage, and get a rough fitting-up there," said our hero; "it's a deuced long run to Gibraltar."

"Depends on how we get the wind, my lad. Port Mahon would be better if we could manage it. But, hark! do you hear that noise aloft; do you feel the change of temperature?"

"There's the nor'-wester aloft, sir," said the first mate, who was standing by the wheel; "it's coming out of the Gulf of Lyons like thunder."

"Be the powers of war! the gale is aloft, sure enough," said Captain O'Loughlin; "it will strike us very shortly. Now my lads," turning to the crew, who were splicing the main brace, "let us see what we can do to get up a jury-mast, just to keep us steady before the gale. Faith! here it is, and no mistake."

As he spoke there was a loud roar like thunder, and the well-known and much dreaded nor'-wester of the Gulf of Lyons was upon them.

It could do them no harm at that time, so in a few moments they were running before a storm nearly equal in violence to the previous gale, and bitterly cold; but Captain O'Loughlin knew they would run out of that gale in less than twelve hours. The nor'-westers of the Gulf of Lyons rarely blow a hundred miles out from the gulf, getting less violent, and losing their bitter coldness, as they approach the African or Barbary coast.

As there was nothing to apprehend in running before the gale, and the dawn breaking, and the sky clearing to windward, Captain O'Loughlin insisted upon our hero retiring for a few hours' rest, and getting rid of his soaking garments.

William Thornton felt little inclination to sleep, but he was quite willing to change his clothes, for he was soaked from head to foot. Nevertheless, as there might be plenty to do during the next twelve hours, he turned in, and before he was well aware of it, was sound asleep. He might have slept about three hours, when he was suddenly aroused by the loud boom of cannon. Jumping up, he was dressed in a few minutes, and hurried on deck, one or two more guns expediting his movements.

To his extreme surprise, he beheld his Commander and the whole crew of the *Babet* actively engaged dragging a couple of long twelve-pounders aft, and, looking in that direction, he beheld a craft of their own size, with only her lower mast standing, and, under her fore course, following them.

Captain O'Loughlin had rigged up a flag-staff, from which floated the flag of Old England. They had got up a jury-mast forward, and some of the crew were bending on a yard a spare topsail. There was not a cloud in the sky, the gale blowing with unmitigated violence, and a nor'-west sea rapidly rising, though a tremendous swell still ran in from the eastward.

"By all that's lively, William," said Captain O'Loughlin, "we are in for a brush with that fellow after us. He's a privateer, I think; he was close-hauled till he made us out, and then he squared away after us. Now, my lads, steady! His metal is not nearly as heavy as ours; watch the rise," and bang went the twelve-pounder cannonade.

The messenger went through the stranger's fore course; what other damage it did they could not see; but, carrying so much canvas, their pursuer was coming up rapidly—he was then not more than half a mile astern.

The decks were now cleared, and every preparation made for action. In spite of their crippled state, they found they could work six of their guns well, and powder and shot were handed up in abundance. With their two cannonades they kept up a tolerably well-directed fire upon the Frenchman, whilst he, with his bow chasers, returned the compliment, but, as yet, without doing mischief.

The Babet was very shortly furnished with sail forward, under which she moved, it soon appeared, nearly as fast as the privateer—for such their pursuer was—and, as she yawed in the sea, they could see she was full of men.

A lucky shot from the Babet cut the slings of her fore yard, not being hung in chains, bringing it down with a crash upon her deck.

"Come, that's a settler for you, Master Crapaud," sung out the gunner; but immediately their pursuers set their main course without a reef, under which she tore through the water, and in less than half-an-hour it became very evident she would pour a broadside into them. She was a fine, handsome craft, apparently carrying sixteen guns, and well manned. She hoisted the privateer flag, and ranging up alongside, within pistol-shot, poured in a discharge of grape and canister from her eight-pounders; but, from the fury of the gale, and the tremendous swell, the iron shower passed harmless over the deck of the Babet.

"Now, my lads," cried Captain O'Loughlin, "we must try and get rid of this troublesome leech, for if the wind lulls, which it will, the farther we draw to the southward, she will be too much for us. So bring over two more guns to this side, watch an opportunity when she heels over to port with the swell, and let her have a dose of round shot below her water-mark."

"Aye, ay, sir," said the gunner; "we'll do our best to physic her."

In so heavy a gale, and with such a sea running, Captain O'Loughlin knew that the privateer would not attempt to board him, as the destruction of both vessels would ensue; neither could he manœuvre the Babet in any other way whatever than

to let her go before the wind. If he attempted to get up his spars, he would expose his men to the musketry of the privateer, whose crew appeared to amount to more than one hundred and twenty. She rolled in the cross sea considerably more than the Babet, having less beam, and her lower masts and main and mizen yards standing.

The two ships were scarcely pistol-shot from each other ; so, watching the opportunity, and the guns being skilfully pointed, the broadside was discharged right into the hull of the privateer, who, rolling over to port, left herself greatly exposed to the iron shower ; as she came upright, she again discharged a broadside of grape upon the Babet, killing one man and wounding three, but not severely. William Thornton was standing anxiously watching the effect of their broadside ; he could hear the shot hulling her, and could see that her bulwarks were knocked into splinters, and the next few minutes satisfied the crew of the Babet that their broadside had, as their Captain hoped, rid them of their dangerous enemy ; for, after a very short time, she altered her course, bracing up on a wind, and heeling over exceedingly on the opposite tack. This was done evidently to keep her wounded side out of the water till they plugged the shot-holes, if they could. A loud cheer from the Babet's crew testified their satisfaction.

"Be my conscience, William, I think our pills will injure our friend's digestion ; she'll have enough to do to keep afloat. One or two of the balls struck very low, and the holes will be hard to get at."

"Yes," returned our hero ; "I saw them strike her. We shall gain some hours, and in that time get up our jury-masts ; this nor'-wester is only a squall after the deluge of rain. I was down with our poor passengers, who were terribly frightened by the firing ; in truth, they have had a poor time of it since we started."

"You may say that, William," said the Captain ; "it is to be hoped we have had the worst of it. I have seen land these last ten minutes away there to the south-west—Majorca or Ivica, no doubt."

William Thornton looked in that direction, above the storm-tossed billows, and could distinctly discover the high land stretching away to the southward.

"It cannot be the mainland," he observed, promptly, "for I can make out its termination. No doubt it is Ivica, the smallest of the islands."

"Well, the sooner we get to work the better. You see our friend the privateer still keeps on the same tack, with reduced canvas."

Going steadily before the gale, the Babet, excepting an

occasional roll, remained pretty steady, and there were tokens of the gale lulling; so all hands turned to, to get their jury-masts and yards up. The corvette was well supplied with everything in the shape of rigging and sails, an abundance of rope, and some fine spars. They worked unceasingly, speedily rigged a pair of spars, whilst the wind and the sea were rapidly falling. There was not a cloud to be seen—the sun shining as bright and glorious as in the early autumn, though the air was exceedingly keen.

Before sunset, Ivica was plainly to be seen, and, in the distance, the other islands; and so well and energetically did the crew work, that a main and mizen jury-mast were stepped and wedged, and before dark they could set sufficient canvas to permit them to alter their course, and draw off from the land, towards which they had been previously running.

During the evening, both the gale and the sea gradually fell; the night was fine and bright, and the air less cold. Before twelve on the following day, the Babet looked like a new-rigged craft, with reduced spars; and by working all day, and the weather continuing fine, she could set as much sail as a craft half her size; but, being a remarkably fast sailer, she went through the water at a very fair speed, and so satisfied became her commander with her rig, that he resolved to continue his voyage to England under it, giving up his previous intention of putting in to Gibraltar to refit.

Off the Cap de Gatt they had a calm of two days, with the weather warm, so that the females could enjoy air, and a little exercise. They had quite recovered their sea-sickness, and little Mabel, in anticipating her future meeting with her mother in England, was rapidly increasing in spirits.

She was sitting one beautifully fine evening, the last of the calm, beside William Thornton, gazing over the ship's side at the long line of Spanish coast, not more than two leagues from them, on which the sun was shining brightly, and watching the numerous craft, becalmed, like themselves—some with their lofty latine yards and sails, lying in graceful folds, their crews plying their long sweeps, and creeping gradually along the coast, whilst lying within a mile of them were two Spanish gun-boats, or "guarda costa," and, some three leagues seaward, two vessels, evidently frigates, but whether English or French they could not make out.

"Oh! how different this is, William," exclaimed Mabel, "from the frightful storm of the last few days. How quiet and beautiful this blue sea looks! and how delightful to catch a glimpse of the land, which, do you know, we all thought we should never see again."

"Ah, Mabel, I dare say you were terribly frightened," re-

marked the midshipman, thinking it was very possible that the thin, almost haggard-looking little girl, with her quiet and wonderfully expressive eyes, with the brows so beautifully marked, might turn out a very lovely girl in a few years; "but tell me, dear, now that we have a quiet hour, and our handsome commander is so busy learning French from Mademoiselle Agatha——"

"Oh, yes," interrupted Mabel, with a smile "if he is anxious to learn French, dear Agatha is quite as anxious to learn English, and the Captain is so quick. But what were you going to ask me, William, when I so thoughtlessly interrupted you?"

"Why, to tell me all you remember about your little self, and how you came to lose your poor brother, who was not a native of France, and was too young to be mixed up in the political parties which distracted, and still distract that unhappy country, France."

"Ah!" replied Mabel, with a sigh, "I was younger than dear Julian, and yet they would have killed me but for good Monsieur Jean Plessis. When I was very young—too young to remember things well, only mamma has often spoken of that time—we were with mamma's husband, at his château far away in France, near the sea coast, in Normandy, I think. That château was called Coulancourt, for mamma's husband possessed other estates besides those near Lyons. Ah! I have heard mamma say we were very happy then. The Duke so loved mamma, and loved us; our own father could not have loved us more. I remember numbers of servants, and attendants, and chasseurs, and the great château of Coulancourt, with its great trees and lawn before it; but mamma said the troubles were coming over France, and the Duke was called to Paris, and we all went with him. Then, after a time, mamma was persuaded to go with us to Lyons, for Paris became dangerous for Royalists, and Lyons was then a great royal city.

"So we went to Lyons, and there we stayed till the whole country of France became disturbed, and then—ah! shall I ever forget mamma's agony!—Monsieur Plessis arrived from Paris with the news of the good Duke's death. Oh! how we all cried. My brother Julian was frantic, and wished to go to Paris; but Jean Plessis implored him to stay, telling him that his mother required all his care.

"Monsieur Plessis' wife and little daughter Julia were at the château. Dear Julia was only two years older than I; but she was so sensible and so loving, she made me dote upon her, whilst mamma could not bear to be a moment without Madame Plessis.

"We were not long destined to remain in peace. The

terrible Collet d'Herbois came to the château. I do not know what he said or did, but he made mamma tremble, and Jean Plessis was away in Toulon, where he possessed some property; and before our protector returned, a party of furious Revolutionists, with this wicked D'Herbois at their head, surrounded the château, plundered it, drove all our domestics to flight, and carried us all prisoners into Lyons, and lodged us in a frightful prison. Oh! what we suffered from hunger, and cold, and want of every kind of necessary! Our cell was damp, and with very little light, and, to make things worse, they took Julian from us. Oh! that was a terrible day.

"Collet d'Herbois came every day, and once, showing my mamma a paper, said, 'Sign this, and you and your children shall be released.' 'Never, wretch, never!' exclaimed mamma, passionately; 'I will die first!' The cruel wretch stamped with fury, saying, 'Die! yes, cursed brood of aristocrats, you shall die!'

"'Oh, my child!' my poor mamma would say, as I hung round her neck, 'that monster wants to be my husband, and to be possessed of all the Duke's lands. I care not for them; I offered him all. But to be his wife—oh, horror! rather welcome death. But when I think of you and Julian, my heart fails.' From that hour," concluded Mabel, "we never saw Julian again;" and the tears streamed from her eyes.

The midshipman pressed his little companion's hand; he soothed her, and then a sudden thought arose that perhaps Julian might still be alive, and he inquired—

"Who told you, dear Mabel, that your brother was beheaded?"

"The horrid gaoler," returned the little girl, with a shudder. "He came into the cell one morning, and, with a frightful laugh, said, 'So the young aristocrat's head is off, with fifty others. It was a fine sight.' Mamma was in hysterics for hours."

"And did no one else tell you but that brutal wretch?" again interrogated the midshipman.

"No, William; but as neither mamma nor Jean Plessis ever heard more of him, it must have been true; for the wicked Democrats cut off all the Royalists' heads they could find in Lyons."

"And yet, Mabel," said our hero, "many circumstances might have occurred to save him. How were you and your mamma rescued?"

"Oh, we lingered a long, long time in that horrid prison, reduced in health, with filthy, bad food and cruel treatment, till at last it was resolved to spare no one in that ill-fated city, not even infants.

"Our savage gaoler at last came for us. 'Come,' said he, with a ferocious laugh, 'you are going to enjoy the fresh air; you will see a grand sight.'"

"Inhuman ruffian!" interrupted William Thornton, passionately.

Mabel gazed up into the flushed face of the midshipman so earnestly, and with so affectionate an expression, as if she had done wrong in paining him, and he said—

"I was wrong, dear Mabel, to ask you to relate such painful scenes; the very mention of them inflames even me. But you got away from the wretches; God still watched over you."

"Ah, yes, God did save us," replied Mabel, "and sent Jean Plessis in time to rescue us. We were brought out, with hundreds of others, from our vile prison. Oh! how the sun dazzled us, after being so long in the dark cell without its blessed light! When we could look round, we saw the streets filled with a furious mob. We were forced to walk, and those with us said we were to be tied to trees and shot down by cannon; and the prisoners cried and sobbed, whilst the crowd laughed, and hooted, and jeered us, as aristocrats. Amidst these insults we were paraded through the streets till we came to a great square, all in ruins. The houses on all sides were tumbled down, and their furniture tossed about and strewn all over the space—the frightful wretch, Collet d'Herbois, had ordered the town to be blown up. I clung to the side of mamma, whose sweet face was turned towards heaven, as she prayed. Indeed, William, I did not think then of death, but of what mamma suffered. And dear mamma thought only of me.

"The horrid gaolers now put us by dozens in a cart. Mamma had her hands tied, but I lay in her arms, almost insensible, though I could feel her tears rolling down my face and neck, and could hear her sobbing, 'Oh, God! spare my last and only one; I am resigned, but in mercy spare her!' I think I was roused then, when I heard those words, and felt her lips pressed to mine, for I cried out, 'No, no, where you go I go.' Then there was a great and terrible shout from the multitude; the soldiers on horseback trampled on the crowd; shrieks and frightful cries filled the air; the cart we were in was surrounded and overturned; there was firing of guns, and then mamma and I were torn from the cart, mantles thrown over us, and we were hurried along without seeing or knowing anything. By and by—how long I cannot say—our eyes were uncovered—I was in mamma's arms; we were in a boat, and Jean Plessis and another man, stripped of their coats, pulling strongly at the oars.

"We were going down the Rhone—we were saved! We

endured a great deal getting to Toulon, Jean Plessis' native town, and the house he put us in there was his own; for his father, at one time, was very well off. You know all the rest, dear William; and now do you really think it possible my brother might have been saved? Surely Jean Plessis would have heard of him."

"No, my dear Mabel, perhaps not; because your brother might have still remained in prison, or have been forced to join the Republican army as a soldier, like hundreds of others."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mabel, with enthusiasm, "what happiness would be in store for mamma, if Julian lives."

"Do you remember the Duke, your stepfather, well?" questioned our hero.

"Yes; though for more than two years before his death he was absent from the château."

"And what kind of a man was the Duke, Mabel?"

"Oh, a grand, tall gentleman, with such a kind, gentle look; but he was quite grey—oh, much older than mamma; he looked more like her father than her husband, and he was so kind to Julian and myself; I loved him as well as if he had been my own father."

"Won't you, William, be rejoiced to see your father and mother, when we get to England?" asked Mabel, fixing her expressive eyes on the midshipman, who, for an instant, looked sad. Mabel saw the change in his handsome features at once, and, taking his hand in hers, said, softly—

"I fear I have asked a question that pains you; like me, perhaps, you have lost a parent?"

"I never had the blessing of seeing, to my remembrance, either father or mother," returned William Thornton. "I was picked up at sea, in a boat, by the crew of a French frigate called the *Surveillante*."

"What name did you mention, Master Thornton?" interrupted Madame Volney, who had approached the two young people unobserved; "I thought you mentioned a vessel I remember well."

"I was telling Mabel, madame," replied the midshipman "that I was picked up in a boat, when a child of perhaps two years old, by the crew of the *Surveillante* frigate. The vessel that my unfortunate parents were in, it is conjectured, had been run down in a gale by that vessel."

"Mon Dieu! how strange and extraordinary," returned Madame Volney, sitting down by the surprised young couple. "My brother was first-lieutenant of the *Surveillante* at that time, and often has he spoken to me, years afterwards, of that event, and of the child they picked up—the only living thing saved, as they thought. The *Surveillante* afterwards fought

the English frigate the Quebec; and so greatly was the *Surveillante* injured, that she went ashore on a reef off Isle Dieu."

A breeze of wind suddenly springing up, and taking them aback, put a stop to the conversation becoming so interesting to our hero; but Madame Volney said, as our hero proceeded to fulfil some duty, "We will talk of this again, Master Thornton, for I have something to say that may interest you."

CHAPTER X.

THE springing up of a breeze, and in an adverse direction, with a promise of blowing fresh, disappointed all on board; for they fully expected that with the land wind, usually blowing during the night, the vessel would make good way towards Gibraltar.

However, there was no fear of meeting any of the enemy's cruisers so near that stronghold of Great Britain; but, not being able to make out the two ships of war in the offing, the *Babet* tacked in shore, with the intention of working along the coast.

"How very singular," observed Captain O'Loughlin, to our hero, as they walked the deck together, "that Madame Volney's brother should happen to command the *Surveillante* at the time they picked you up. I should not be at all surprised that you may hear something very important concerning yourself—perhaps even the name of your parents."

"I am greatly excited by the same idea," said the midshipman; "for, though I do not often talk about the circumstance of my birth, yet, in secret, it haunts my mind."

"Faith, William," said the Commander of the *Babet*, "I never bestowed a thought upon the respected authors of my being until now," and the Captain tried to sigh and look sentimental.

"And why now, old friend?"

"Don't you think me, William, a complete madman to be after letting myself fall over head and ears in love with a French Admiral's daughter?—and I a poor devil of a Lieutenant, worse off than yourself; for, by the powers of war! your father and mother may turn out, as in fairy tales, prince and princess; whereas mine, if I had any, were honest—by the bye, that's doubtful!—pains-taking shoemakers."

"Why, what on earth puts that into your head, O'Loughlin?"

"Stop till I light my pipe, and I'll tell you all about it; I enjoy a pipe when I'm spinning a yarn."

"You may," returned our hero, laughing; "but it sadly interrupts the unity of a story."

"Oh, by St. Patrick! never mind the unity; you will make it out, famously; you will have fire and smoke alternately. My first recollection," began the Captain, "is of a Foundling Hospital in the beautiful city of Cork. How old I might be at the time my recollection begins, I can't say—perhaps five or six.

"There were a round dozen of us, some younger and some older, but none beyond ten, for at ten years of age they were put out as apprentices. As I told you before, my lad, I never heard who my parents were, and, be my conscience! I don't think any one of my comrades were a bit wiser. The treatment we got was none of the best, nor the food neither. When about nine years old, I was told I was to be bound in another year to a shoemaker, as it was very likely my father before me had been one. Why the devil they should think that puzzled me then, uncommonly; for, at that time, I had scarcely worn a shoe to my foot; but I knew I was firmly resolved never to be a shoemaker, or even a cobbler, who is a shade higher in rank in my opinion, as they are, like the king, exempt from taxation. I was a stout, active boy, and could write and read well, and was fond of getting hold of a book of any kind. I made up my mind to relieve the establishment of my presence, and one fine evening, just as it grew dark, I managed to hide myself, got out unobserved, and took to my heels, with a remarkably ragged coat, light airy trousers, seeing that they were full of holes, and as poor a pair of shoes to my feet as ever the son of a shoemaker possessed—and they do say they generally have the worst of those articles of any children.

"You may say with truth that I began the world very humbly, and with remarkably small amount of capital—having just one halfpenny, and that a bad one, in my pocket; but 'a light heart and a thin pair of inexpressibles'—and mine were thin, God knows—is an old saying; so away I went, light every way, for I had had no supper.

"I got out of the town somehow, for I had never been out of it before, greatly tempted to stop and look at the fine shops, all lighting up so gaily, but I was resolved to get into the country. I knew nothing of the locality, had no idea where I was going or what I was going to do; the only thing that occupied my mind was, that a shoemaker I would not be. My first night was passed under a hedge; luckily it was in the summer months—August, I think—so I was not much worse lodged than usual.

"As soon as I awoke I made a start of it, walked a mile or two along the bye-paths, till I came to a small cabin—a labourer's cabin. The father, mother, and seven children were eating their breakfast—that is, the table was covered with a

lot of smoking hot potatoes, and a pile of salt in the middle. The sight made me hungry, so I asked them to let me join them, as I had had neither supper nor breakfast.

"'Bedad, help yourself and welcome,' said the man, and I did.

"In this manner, sleeping under hedges and haystacks, and eating potatoes, whenever I could get them, I travelled for five days, till I was beginning to get foot-sore, when I suddenly beheld the sea from the top of a hill, with a large town at the foot, and a number of vessels lying alongside of a quay. To my boyish eyes, the sea was a glorious object, and I said to myself, 'I will be a sailor.' I knew what a ship was, and what a sailor was, for I remember reading a penny 'Robinson Crusoe,' and being in raptures with it, and vowing at the time I would be a sailor. I met a man driving a flock of sheep, and I asked him the name of the town.

"'Bantry,' says he, and I walked on. I thought the sight I viewed from that hill one of the finest I ever saw, and faith I think so still; as I did when years afterwards I stood upon the same spot, having ascended the hill for the very purpose of bringing my boyish recollection more vivid to my mind. I was descending the hill, a good carriage road winding down it, when I heard a post-chaise coming rapidly after me. I turned and soon perceived that an accident had happened. The pole chain had snapped, and the carriage, which was a gentleman's, laden with a good deal of luggage, was pressing on the back of one horse and knocking him down, whilst the other was kicking and plunging; and a lady with her head out of the window calling out to the postillion to stop: but you might as well have tried to stop a nor'-wester with a lady's parasol. Just as they reached me, the horse, whose pole chain was broken, fell, the carriage gave a lurch, and over it went on the side next the precipice; the door was burst open, and out rolled a little boy scarcely two years old, and with him a curious woolly dog, a poodle; I did not know its name then. Though stupefied and terrified when I saw the child tumble out, the lady's shriek roused me. I rushed over the side, caught the child's garments in one hand, and we rolled down the precipice together some twenty or thirty yards. I luckily grasped a branch of furze just as we were going to topple over the edge of a cliff, full fifty or sixty feet perpendicular, and held on like grim death, still keeping a fast hold of the little boy, the confounded dog sticking to me like a leech, as if it was I that was rolling over the precipice, not his young master, for my special amusement. He bit me two or three times, for I could not help myself; if I let go the child he would tumble over the edge, and if I let go the furze we were sure both to go. I looked up and beheld the

lady and another female above, screaming and clapping their hands, and a gentleman cautiously groping his way down to where we were.

"'Hold on, my brave boy!' shouted the gentleman, in intense anxiety, 'and I'll provide for you for life.' On he came cautiously. I could not stir, for the weight of the child, half hanging over the cliff on my one hand, was quite as much as I could bear. At length the gentleman reached us, and, holding on by a stout branch of a furze with one hand, he dragged me and my burden up out of danger, and clasping the frightened and crying child in his arms, he said, 'God be praised! but for this brave boy I should have lost you, my beloved child,' and he repeatedly kissed the boy till he ceased crying; the lady and her attendant from above anxiously and wildly gazing down on us. The gentleman was in a naval uniform—of course, I did not know it was one then—but his gold epaulette on his shoulders and gold lace attracted my gaze.

"'Now, my fine little fellow, let us get back to the road; luckily we have all escaped, and the postillion is gone into Bantry for help and a post-chaise.' Well, we soon got up, and then the child was embraced and kissed and made much of by the mother, who was very handsome and young. The chaise or carriage lay on its beam end, that is, it had overturned on its front; so the child was leaning on the door when the accident happened, and its swinging open threw him out.

"'And now, my fine little fellow,' said the gentleman, sitting down on one of his own trunks thrown out on the road, 'who are you, and where do you live, for I owe you my child's life?'

"'I lives nowhere, sir,' I replied; and, determined to tell the truth, I said I was a foundling, and had run away because they wanted to make a shoemaker of me, and that I would rather go to sea.

"'Go to sea!' said the gentleman, his handsome wife standing near us, with her pretty child clasped in her arms; 'by Jove, that's just where I am going, and you shall go with me, if you like, and I will take care of you, for it appears by your own account that no one has any claim to you.'

"I kissed the gentleman's hand, my heart beating with joy.

"'Poor little fellow!' observed the lady; 'tell me your name?'

"'Patrick O'Loughlin,' I replied.

"They both smiled, saying, 'A very fine name, indeed; very likely his father's,' said the gentleman. 'Don't think I ever had a father, sir,' I replied, very quietly.

"'Oh, yes,' said the gentleman, laughing; 'you may be quite satisfied you had both father and mother, though they left

you to the care of others. But never mind, my little fellow, I will make a man of you.' Just then we saw the postillion coming up the road, and a post-chaise following, and one or two helpers, and some of the country people attracted by the account of the accident.

"The pole only of the gentleman's carriage was broken, but he and the lady and servant got up into the chaise. I was told to place myself beside the driver, while the postillion remained behind to set up the broken pole and bring the carriage into Bantry.

"On reaching the inn, there appeared a great commotion in receiving my protector, as all the inmates of the hotel turned out, and there was no end of donning of hats, and bows and curtsies.

"'Here, my good dame,' called out the gentleman to the landlady, 'take care of this young boy. Let him have anything he wishes for, and send for a tailor and let him make him a couple of suits of clothes, fit for a lad going to sea. I am going on to Glengariff to-morrow, but shall be back in a couple of days, so let the clothes be ready by that time,' and, patting me on the head, and telling me to go with the landlady, he proceeded up stairs with his wife and child.

"'Bless me!' cried the landlady, looking at me—I was not very aristocratically clothed certainly, and had lost my cap into the bargain. 'Where did you come from, little boy, I never saw you before? You do not belong to this place, do you?'

"'No ma'am,' I replied, 'I come from a long way.'

"'There, Peggy,' said the host, 'don't be after bothering the child. What's it to us where the dickens he comes from. Sure his honour the Captain told you to give him plenty to eat and drink, and get a tailor to make a suit of clothes for him. The great thing in this world is to obey orders, that is, when you are put to no expense, and that you are sure to be paid for executing them. That's the point; and faix, Captain Sir Oscar de Bracy pays like a prince.'

Our hero started when he heard the name of De Bracy, but remained silent.

"'Well, many's the order you gives, *avick*,' said the landlady, 'that's never paid for. But, come along; what's your name, child?'

"'Patrick, ma'am.'

"Well, I'm spinning a fine yarn, William," continued Captain O'Loughlin, knocking his ashes out of his pipe; "but you see, I wanted to show you how small a thing alters one's destiny in this world. If I had not read 'Robinson Crusoe,' I very likely should have been a shoemaker, and if the pole-chain of Sir Oscar de Bracy's carriage had not broken, I should

never have obtained the rank of a lieutenant in His Majesty's Royal navy. I'm not going to weary you with any more of my story, but sum up, as the lawyers say. Captain Sir Oscar de Bracy's ship, the Redoubtable, sixty-four guns, and three frigates, were at anchor in Bantry Bay. When he returned, after leaving his lady at an estate of his near Glengariff, he took me on board with him, and we sailed for Portsmouth, where he put me to a public school, and there I had to fight my way, and found out that my big fist was both father and mother to me, for I pummelled every young urchin's head that cast a slur upon my country, or my orphan state. When fourteen I was appointed a midshipman on board the Concord frigate, through the interest of Sir Oscar de Bracy, and then, after passing my examination—I may say with *éclat*—I was appointed acting-lieutenant of the same ship, and finally third-lieutenant of the Victory. My kind patron is, however, and has been for years, governor of —, in the East Indies, and I heard that he lost his wife and little boy in a most melancholy manner. From the period of my being put to school in Portsmouth, I have never seen him. He took a most affectionate leave of me, told me his lawyer had instructions to provide me with everything, and ample pocket-money; and finally, when I passed my examination, Mr. Bodletope, the lawyer, handed me £500, which he said Sir Oscar de Bracy had left directions for him to do, and trusted that I would be an honour to my country and my noble profession. My heart is full of deep and lasting gratitude to that generous-hearted man, and most acutely I feel his deplorable loss of wife and child so shortly after, as it appears, my saving the child's life."

There was a long pause, broken by the Commander saying, as he turned and looked with surprise upon his young comrade, "Why, what the deuce are you thinking of, William; you look taken aback?"

"I did not interrupt you, Patrick," replied our hero, thoughtfully, "because your brief history has surprised me, and filled my mind with vague ideas and thoughts, a gleam of hope, and a confusion of surmises that bewilder me."

"The deuce it does," returned the Commander; "what have I said to bewilder you? Are you in love?"

"No," said the young man, with a smile; "but one thing I will observe to you first. You said your protector was called Sir Oscar de Bracy."

"So I say still, William. What then?"

"I will tell you. In the letter written by the Duchesse de Coulancourt, directed to the officer, Lieutenant Cooke, you remember, who was in command of the boat that penetrated into Toulon, with Lord Hood's proposals to the Royalists, the

Duchess signed herself—I remember it so well—de Coulancourt, *née* de Bracy ; that is, her maiden name was de Bracy."

"By the powers of war! that is singular and extraordinary," said Patrick O'Loughlin ; "are you sure of that?"

"Quite sure. Lieutenant Cooke read the letter to me, and I was particularly struck with the name at the time; therefore it is not at all improbable but that the Duchess of Coulancourt is perhaps a sister, or at least a relation, of Sir Oscar de Bracy, for that is far from a common name."

"By Jove, it's very likely," said Captain O'Loughlin, with vivacity. "Then that dear little girl may be his niece. But that is not all that makes you so thoughtful and serious, William?"

"Well, not exactly. Now do not think me an enthusiast, but try and answer me a few questions. Can you remember the year in which you saved the life of Sir Oscar de Bracy's child?"

"Can I remember it? faith, I can, my lad. I was then nine years old ; I am now going on twenty-four : it was thus rather more than fourteen—perhaps fifteen—years ago. This is '93 ; that will, as near as I can go to it, make the year of the accident 1778 or '79."

"In the year 1779," said our hero, his cheek flushing as he spoke, "I was picked up, as I told you, at sea in a long boat. No doubt the *Surveillante* frigate ran over the vessel my parents, or those who had the care of me, were in, and thus in a strange way I was the only one saved. You will think me crazy, Patrick, but the coincidence is at least singular. You said Lady de Bracy and her child perished in a melancholy way about a year or so after you saved the child ; do you know in what way?"

William Thornton felt his arm grasped by the warm-hearted O'Loughlin with a nervous hold.

"By Heavens, William!" he exclaimed, somewhat agitated, "you raise strange ideas in my own mind, which may account for the marvellous feeling of attachment I from the first felt for you. If your conjectures, for I understand what you mean, turn out correct—(and now I recollect, when I inquired of Mr. Bodletope, the lawyer, how Lady de Bracy lost her life, he said she was drowned, she, and her child, and every soul, in a heavy gale, on board the *Spitfire* gun brig, on her passage from Bear Haven to Southampton)—God bless me!" continued the Captain, "it's quite possible that the *Spitfire* was run down by the *Surveillante*—the dates correspond—and that you, the boy I have so strangely loved with a brother's affection, may be the child I saved years gone by."

"It's perhaps a wild thought of mine, O'Loughlin," said our hero, pressing his friend's hand ; "but to-morrow we may hear something that may tend to elucidate the mystery from Madame Volney, whose brother was first lieutenant of the

Surveillante at the time she ran down the ship that I was supposed to belong to; she said she had something of importance to communicate."

"By St. Peter! if you turn out to be the son of my noble protector, to whom I owe everything—my position—all," said Patrick O'Loughlin, warmly, "the great desire of my heart will be gratified, for I shall look upon myself as a father to you."

"A young father, O'Loughlin, twenty-four years of age, scarcely seven years older than your son," said our hero. "However, to-morrow much of this wild dream of mine will vanish or be substantiated."

CHAPTER XI.

TOWARDS sun-set the following day the Babet was within sight of Gibraltar, the wind having shifted, during the night, to the eastward. The ladies were all on deck, anxious for a view of the rock, the bold and noble front of which, approaching from the eastward, is particularly fine, and struck Madame Volney and her daughters with admiration, and Mabel with wonder. They were only three leagues distant; and as Captain O'Loughlin required some few things to complete his jury rig, he resolved to run into the bay for a day, and give his guests an opportunity of landing and seeing the place.

"I promised you yesterday, Mr. Thornton," said Madame Volney, sitting down beside the anxious midshipman, "to give you some particulars concerning the young child saved in the long boat by the sailors of the Surveillante. I stated that the frigate—so my brother told me—went ashore on a reef off Isle Dieu; part of the crew became mutinous, and got at the spirits. However, as many remained true, the frigate was got off, and anchored, very little damaged; and the next day my brother, who was greatly interested about the child, inquired for him, and was grieved and vexed to hear that in the hurry and confusion of the preceding night, the English prisoners had got away with the jolly boat, and no doubt had taken the child with them. Now my brother was the first person that received the child when handed on board the Surveillante, and he carried him down in his arms, for he was nearly dead, to the cabin stove, and with the steward's assistance applied restoratives. In stripping him of his wet garments to wrap him in hot blankets, he perceived a small morocco case fastened round the child's neck, and on opening it beheld the small miniature of a very handsome man, in a British naval uniform, and on the back, in small gold letters, 'Oscar de Bracy!'"

"My God, how extraordinary!" exclaimed the midshipman, greatly agitated; and the hand little Mabel was holding nervously pressed hers.

"You suspected this disclosure, Mr. Thornton, I see," said Madame Volney.

"Yes, madame; I thought and hoped something might lead to this important announcement."

He then briefly related Mr. O'Loughlin's intercourse with Sir Oscar de Bracy, but carefully refrained from stating his friend's early history, merely saying that Sir Oscar de Bracy was Captain O'Loughlin's guardian, and that he had saved his boy's life when a mere child of two years old.

"Providence, my dear Mr. Thornton," observed Madame Volney, much interested, "brings about and reveals circumstances, apparently wrapped up in impenetrable mystery, in its own good time. I feel quite satisfied you are the child taken out of the long boat by the crew of the *Surveillante*, and I greatly regret not having that portrait, which I always carried with me, in my possession. My brother was exceedingly annoyed at the loss of the child, for he had intended questioning one of the English prisoners, who seemed greatly interested in the little boy; but he did not know what to do, for he was, from the death of the Captain of the *Surveillante*, the next in command, and her situation required her going into port. He therefore took her into Rochefort, and almost immediately after was ordered to Paris. I was there with my family. Alas! there were then symptoms of the terrible times coming. One evening he related to me all the circumstances concerning the child, and gave me the portrait to keep, putting down in a pocket-book everything connected with the event, the date, the day, and even hour. Immediately after this he was ordered on a secret expedition to the West Indies in command of a frigate, and there, alas, he died of the yellow fever. When forced to fly from Paris, I had to leave everything behind me in our mansion, and Heaven knows what became of all! I saved our jewels; and by the precaution of my deeply lamented husband, a large sum of money was secured for our support in a foreign land. We fled to Toulon, where my husband possessed a fine estate, thinking that the march of the Revolution might be checked by the determined loyalty of the Toulon inhabitants and the fleet; but you are aware how affairs turned out."

William Thornton expressed himself very grateful to Madame for her narrative, and the interest she expressed, and that he must only rest contented with the state of things as they were, until he could communicate with Sir Oscar de Bracy, if he still lived.

Little Mabel, who had been listening with wrapt attention, and watching the changes in the expressive features of our hero, suddenly said—

"Mamma's name was De Bracy; and if you, dear William, are a De Bracy, we must be relations; is it not so?"

"I trust it may prove so, Mabel; such a contingency would make me very happy indeed."

Captain O'Loughlin joined them, with the two Miss Volneys, who had been walking the deck with him; for somehow the gallant Captain contrived—whether with his tongue or his eyes, we cannot say—to make himself wonderfully agreeable to both these young ladies, and, as he hoped, especially to Mademoiselle Agatha.

When the ladies retired to the cabin, the two friends continued to pace the deck; and William Thornton detailed the particulars of Madame Volney's narrative, confirming their conjectures of the previous night.

"From my heart I warmly congratulate you," cried the Irishman, pressing the midshipman's hand. "Be my conscience! another thing gladdens my heart as much as any other part of the information you have received, and that is, that you're a countryman of mine. And faith, let John Bull mimic us, and denounce us, in his arrogance, as a vulgar and ignorant set, without any pretensions to be gentlemen, and all rebels at heart; he is vastly mistaken. There are as loyal hearts in old Ireland, and as good blood too, as any in Britain; and though we may like a row and a drop of whisky now and then, we are always ready to stand up for the flag of old England whenever it needs our defence. Now I tell you what we must do: the moment we get to England we must inquire whether Sir Oscar de Bracy has returned to his native land; if not, he must be written to at once; and there is no question, in my opinion, when he hears all the particulars, but that he will with joy and delight own you as his son."

Our hero was so full of conflicting thoughts arising from the recent unexpected revelations, so momentous to him, that he could scarcely reply to questions or attend to his friend's conversation. This singular combination of events, produced by the very simple fact of his being permitted to accompany Lieutenant Cooke in the expedition to Toulon, had led to the whole; all those with whom he had thus become connected were linked in a chain of evidence.

"You seem in the clouds, William," remarked O'Loughlin; "and, indeed, there is enough to bewilder a young head like yours; but there's no use in bothering one's brains till the time comes for action. See, we shall run into the bay in a very short time; and, since we are here, I think I will try and

get up a better and taunter set of masts, if the Port-Admiral is willing. If we should chance to have a brush or a run with any of the enemy's cruisers on our way home, we should be at a great disadvantage."

An hour afterwards the *Babet* was at anchor. As nothing of any consequence occurred during the forty-eight hours they remained in Gibraltar, and as Mr. O'Loughlin was not allowed a refit, the Commander on the station thinking he was quite in a condition to make the voyage to England, he again got under weigh, having spent a few hours, however, in escorting his fair guests over the lions of the place.

Two days after leaving Gibraltar, the weather became very bad, so much so, that both the Captain and our hero doubted the power of the *Babet*, under her thin rig, to save herself from being blown ashore on the coast of Spain. However, with a slight change in the weather, they safely entered the Bay of Biscay, though, owing to the violence of alternate westerly and northerly gales, much too close in with the French coast for their liking. The weather had been so thick, squally, and bitterly cold up to this time, that the ladies were forced to keep below; and but once, indeed, from the period of leaving Gibraltar, were they able to walk the deck. It was the month of January, and they could expect nothing else. One night the wind fell, but a heavy sea and a thick fog still prevailed—thick as during the two previous days. Just at daybreak a very light breeze sprung up from the nor'-west, and, as the fog lifted a little, our hero, who was on the watch, thought he perceived, as he was looking out over the weather quarter, something dark, that loomed like the hull of a craft, amid the vapour. He called the attention of the quarter-master, who was standing near him, to the object, but the fog again grew dense, and obscured their view; but so satisfied was William that what he had seen was the hull of a vessel, that as they were on dangerous ground, he roused his Commander, who had lain down half-dressed. He jumped up in a moment, knowing how sharp and quick the young midshipman's eyes were, and ascended upon deck. Five minutes afterwards the fog again lifted, and so suddenly, that the water was perfectly clear for five hundred yards all round. To the great surprise of all parties, those on board the corvette beheld, within three hundred yards of them, two vessels, whose calling there was no mistaking.

The nearest, our hero thought one of the handsomest vessels of her class he had ever seen. She was a long, low, beautifully-shaped craft, lugger rigged, but with the taunt masts raking like a slaver's. She carried ten four-pounders and several brass swivels, and appeared to be full of men. The other was a schooner, a handsome vessel, and carrying eight guns, probably six-poun-

Both crowded sail when they beheld the Babet; but, as the tricolour was flying at the corvette's peak, and her French build deceived them, they tacked and stood towards them.

"Now, my lads," said Captain O'Loughlin, "we must take those two fellows or sink them. That lugger, I know, can out-sail us, therefore the first thing to do is to cripple him; so down with the tricolour, and give him a dose under the bunting—that always wins."

Down went the revolutionary flag, and in its place arose old England's ensign. This proceeding astounded the two strangers. The lugger was the well-known and notorious privateer, *Vengeance*, the fastest and most successful of its description, out of any French port—a perfect pest to commerce. This, of course, was not then known to those on board the Babet, neither could our hero imagine how much that said lugger would affect his after destiny.

The moment the lugger became aware of the dangerous enemy she was approaching, then she wore, firing her starboard guns at the same time.

But the Babet poured in a broadside from her heavy metal that seemed to do considerable mischief; in fact, wounding her main mast so severely that, had there been more wind, it would have gone overboard.

The schooner came boldly up, and, seeing how few men were on board the Babet, fired a broadside into the corvette, cutting her rigging up, and wounding two of her crew. She had also a heavy pivot-gun, which she was preparing to use, loaded with grape.

But, the wind freshening, the crew of the corvette, with a hearty cheer, returned the broadside, at only pistol-shot distance. This action evidently confounded the crew of the schooner, which at once bore up, whilst a discharge from the larboard side of the Babet knocked the mainmast of the lugger over the side.

Again did the crew of the corvette cheer, though, unfortunately, one man was killed, and four wounded, by the broadside. The schooner, however, having her braces and principal rigging shot away, missed stays, and the next minute the Babet luffing up, the schooner fell on board her, on her starboard quarter.

"Now then," exclaimed young Thornton, to his favourite top-man, Bill Saunders, who had been purposely selected to accompany the corvette to England; "now then, let us at them with cutlass and pistol!" and, with a wild hurrah, he sprang into the shrouds of the schooner, and then, cutlass in hand, sprung upon her deck.

Saunders followed, with a daring set of boarders, and, swinging his cutlass round his head, dashed headlong after his favourite. There were nearly fifty men on deck, and the

boarders of the corvette were met at first with desperate obstinacy. But the midshipman was a daring youth, of great activity and strength for his years; he burst through the enemy and reached the Captain, who was furiously urging on his men, swearing he would sink the schooner before he would strike his flag. Seeing young Thornton driving his men forward, he aimed his pistol at his head, but missed him; whilst our hero, drawing one from his belt, fired in return, and the Captain fell dead upon the deck. The mate, uttering a terrible oath, clutched his musket, and, with a blow behind, felled William Thornton beside the Captain; but Bill Saunders drove his cutlass through the mate, and had lifted the midshipman in his arms, just as Captain O'Loughlin, with a dozen men, threw himself on board.

Dispirited and disheartened by the fall of their Captain, and seeing their mate desperately wounded, the crew of the schooner threw down their arms and surrendered.

During this contest on board the schooner, the Vengeance, in her crippled state, had kept up a constant fire upon the Babet, but a dense fog again setting in, accompanied by drizzling rain, shut out all objects around.

"Are you much hurt, William?" demanded O'Loughlin, anxiously, of the midshipman, as he sat on the cabin hatch, letting Bill Saunders bind up his wound on the head with a handkerchief.

"No, nothing of any consequence," replied our hero, rising up, and looking around; "but where is the lugger?"

"To the deuce with the lugger!" cried Captain O'Loughlin; "jump on board and pacify the women; they are frightened out of their wits, and have got it into their heads you are killed."

The young man jumped on to the deck of the Babet, and in another minute was in the cabin. Mabel gave a cry of joy, and the girls, shaking him by the hand, expressed their joy at his safety—hoping that Captain O'Loughlin was unhurt, and, indeed, anxious for the safety of all on board.

"Our gallant Captain is quite safe," replied our hero, petting his little favourite, who clung to him with sweet affection.

"You have had a terrible fight, Master Thornton," observed Madame Volney; "and you are hurt."

"We certainly had a sharp brush whilst it lasted," said our hero; "but, as to my hurt, it is nothing. O'Loughlin has persuaded me that I am an Irishman, and, consequently, my head is composed of harder material than heads are usually. Now, having proved I am alive, I must leave you, and help my Commander to clear the vessels," and, kissing Mabel, he hurried up on deck.

The schooner was named the Bon-Citoyen, and had been

commanded by the late Victor Chabot, whose brother-in-law was Captain of the Vengeance. It was a valuable prize; having a large sum of money on board, besides some valuable cargo, previously taken from English ships.

It was finally settled between Captain O'Loughlin and our hero that the latter should run the schooner, with ten men, to Plymouth, keeping company with the Babet as long as circumstances or weather would permit. Accordingly, after the prisoners had been disposed of, and the dead committed to the deep, Thornton proceeded to bid the females farewell for a time.

This separation annoyed them all. Mabel was in tears, and almost felt inclined to ask to go in the schooner with her friend.

"We shall be alongside all the time, Mabel," observed her young protector, "so keep up your spirits. We shall meet again in England in a couple of days."

The midshipman proceeded on board the prize, taking with him, as his mate, Bill Saunders. There were four killed on board the schooner besides the Captain, and nine wounded, including the mate, a man apparently of a brutal and fierce disposition; for though carefully attended and taken to the Babet—he could walk notwithstanding his wound—he cursed and vowed vengeance the whole time. The vessel was very little damaged in her spars or sails, her rigging had principally suffered; but a few hours would set all that to rights. Captain O'Loughlin, as the weather was thick, arranged a mode of signals should the fog continue, and he also agreed to fire a gun if he tacked. So, shaking hands, the friends parted, and in a few minutes, so dense was the fog, they lost sight of each other.

Young Thornton naturally felt very proud of his command; and though he limped a little from the thrust of a boarding-pike in the leg, and smarting at times from the blow on the head, he walked the deck of the prize with amazing satisfaction, wishing for Charles Pole as a companion, now that he had lost the kind-hearted, cheerful O'Loughlin.

The schooner, after parting from the Babet, kept close hauled, sailing about six knots; the water was tolerably smooth, but the rain fell in thick drizzling showers. Bill Saunders was taking a turn at the helm, when our hero paused in his walk beside him.

"I wish it would clear, Bill," he observed, in a thoughtful tone; "for though I am steering the course agreed upon, I am not at all satisfied that we shall clear the French coast on this tack. Can you lie no higher?"

"No, sir; her topsail shivers now. It is very thick, and for nearly four days we have not had a glimpse of the land. Where do you say we are, sir?"

"Captain O'Loughlin thought we were somewhere off Isle

Dieu, about two or three leagues distant, but I fear we are much nearer. Now if that is the case, and the wind stands as it is, we shall never be able to weather the West Penmarks."

"Suppose as how, sir," said Bill, "if the weather keeps thick like this—and it is thick enough for soup—suppose as how, sir, we makes a long leg seaward."

"I shall certainly do so, Bill, if it keeps on this way. The swell is also very rapidly increasing from the nor'-west, an ugly customer where we are, to say nothing of the chances of meeting privateers and cruisers from Brest. I wonder where that lugger is now? not far off, I dare say. She is a very beautiful craft, certainly the handsomest lugger rigged vessel I ever saw."

"We should have had her also, sir, only for this here fog—darn it."

Towards sunset, instead of looking up, the schooner fell off, the wind heading them, and freshening considerably. On sounding several times, our hero found he had forty or fifty fathoms; this he knew to be about the soundings close in with Belleisle, a couple of leagues off. He ought to have about sixty.

Calling the gunner, he desired him to fire a gun, as agreed upon when either vessel should tack. This was done, and all listened, thinking it would be returned, but, finding no response, he ordered the schooner about.

"I do not think the Babet has outsailed us in this light wind," observed our hero to an old and experienced man-of-war's man, who acted as his first mate.

"No, sir; under-rigged as the corvette is, I should say this craft would outsail her, and beat her on a wind. Perhaps the Captain tacked and forgot to fire the gun."

"I do not think that," returned our hero. "However, we will let her stand on this board;" and, having set the watch, and taking all necessary precautions, he retired to eat his dinner and have a look at what the cabin contained.

CHAPTER XII.

THE main cabin of the Bon-Citoyen was, though not very large, extremely comfortable, and bore a very war-like aspect, the panels and sides all being covered with various small arms arranged in fanciful devices. Young as he was, and a midshipman, Thornton could not help reflecting on the uncertainty of life, when he recollected that a few hours back the cabin had been tenanted by Captain Victor Chabot, in full life and vigour, and

now, thought our hero, he lies at the bottom of that vast expanse of ocean that entombs so many thousands. Too young to be sad, or reflect long on serious things, the young commander, shaking off the feeling of depression that had for a moment come over him, returned upon deck. The fog was still thick, but the wind was rapidly increasing, and so was the sea. Before midnight they were under a double-reefed topsail, and double-reefed mainsail and foresail; the schooner was then put about, with her head to the nor'-nor'-east.

Our hero was too anxious to retire to rest; he felt too great a responsibility rested upon him, particularly in the then state of the weather, and the ticklish situation in which they were placed. He also felt uneasy at not being answered by the Babet when he had fired the gun at sunset; so that altogether he was extremely anxious for daylight. The fog, as the wind increased, was gradually dispersing, and towards morning the mist over the sea had totally disappeared. The gale and sea went on increasing, so that when the day made, all hands on board anxiously scanned the horizon around. As the light increased, land was at once seen on the starboard bow, and not more than two leagues distant; but a mist hung over the coast, rendering it obscure.

"I am certain the land we see ahead is the West Penmarks, Mr. Lochart," said our hero to the first mate; "and it is very strange I cannot make out the Babet anywhere, or the lugger. I see a brig standing under close-reefed topsails to the sou'-west, and three or four other craft under easy canvas running in for the land."

"There is certainly, sir, no Babet to be seen," replied Mr. Lochart, "and it makes me uneasy; for if we had not tacked we should have been unable to weather the land under our starboard bow, and in this gale embayed, we might not have been able to carry sufficient canvas to work out."

William Thornton, if the weather had permitted, would have felt inclined to stand back, and see what could have become of the corvette, it seemed so strange that they should thus have parted company; but his instructions were, under any circumstances, to make the best of his way to Plymouth, and so, though very unhappy, fearing some accident to the corvette and his little charge, Mabel, thus deserted by him, though far from his intention to do so, he carried on till he made the land out, when he found he was quite correct, as the ranges of rocks he first beheld were the West Penmarks.

Having weathered the land, he was able to ease off his tacks, and finally running before the gale, he ran into Plymouth Sound the evening of the second day from parting company with the Babet.

Leaving him in safety, we must return to discover what became of the corvette and our little heroine, Mabel Arden, who was greatly grieved when she understood that her young protector being made master of the schooner, the *Bon-Citoyen*, they would be separated; but Madame Volney consoled her by the assurance that the two vessels would be close alongside one another the rest of the voyage.

Although the *Babet* and her prize had lost sight of each other, owing to the dense fog, both vessels steering the same course, the crews did not expect to be very far asunder when the fog should clear off, and permit them seeing over the water.

Now it unfortunately happened, as the wind increased, that the men who went aloft to reef the *Babet's* topsail found the fore topmast had been so very badly injured by a ball from the heavy pivot gun of the *Bon-Citoyen*, that it required fixing and securing before they could attempt to carry sail up it, and whilst this was doing the *Babet* was kept away a point or two. On a closer examination it was found necessary to shift the spar altogether, and the corvette was then brought on a wind under her fore course, double-reefed main-topsail, and driver; thus, as the schooner sailed two feet for her one, by sunset she was out of hearing of her gun. Captain O'Loughlin felt not at all uneasy, for, unfortunately, he did not consider himself so near the land as he was. Thus, they had scarcely shifted their fore-topmast and got up another, when the man forward called out, in a loud and alarmed voice—

“Land on the larboard bow.”

And the very next instant the *Babet* struck the ground with considerable force; but the next moment beat over the tail of a bank, and getting stern way on, her commander instantly ordered her anchor to be let go, and her sails to be furled. This was promptly and well executed, and the *Babet* at once rode to her anchor. They were then in five fathoms water. This untoward event occurred about an hour after midnight. So exceedingly thick was the weather, accompanied with a continuous drizzling rain, that even at the short distance they were from the land, it was invisible.

Several of the French prisoners were on deck, and they said without hesitation that the *Babet* had struck on one of the shelving banks on the north-east end of Belleisle; that they were quite aware the vessel would run ashore, but it was no business of theirs; they were only a few hours out from Belleisle themselves when they fell in with the *Babet*. This statement Captain O'Loughlin felt to be truth. After doing all he could to assuage the alarm of the females, and set a guard over his prisoners, who appeared inclined to be unruly, he ordered the

boat to be lowered, and the second mate and a boat's crew were sent to sound astern of them ; but, to their surprise, they came almost immediately upon a rocky shoal, about twenty fathoms from where the ship lay ; and, finally, they discovered she was surrounded with rocks, so much so, that it appeared incredible how she got where she was without striking some of them. Where the corvette lay the water was tolerably smooth, though the wind increased rapidly. There was nothing to be done, however, till daylight ; for to attempt to extricate her from her extraordinary position at that time was out of the question. They had thirty-four able bodied prisoners on board, including officers, and fourteen wounded ; these Captain O'Loughlin at once determined to put ashore as soon as dawn broke, so that he might not be hampered in either saving the ship or defending himself from any enemy that might attack him. He had but thirty-five men able to work the Babet, including his officers and the surgeon.

As the daylight appeared the fog lifted, the gale increased, but shifted a point or two, so that where the vessel lay the wind blew partly off the shore. It was only an hour's ebb when he anchored, so that at low water he touched the ground, but no more, and the swell was very trifling.

Before sun-rise the mist and fog had all disappeared, and anxiously every one gazed around them. To their surprise, the first thing that caught their sight was their late antagonist, the Vengeance lugger, lying at anchor, at the back of a low point, not four hundred yards from them. She was still without her main-mast ; but the moment the look-out caught sight of the Babet, her cable was cut, and in an instant her fore and mizen lug were set, and she was under weigh. Dropping out from under the land, and getting to a distance, she was hove to, evidently watching the movements of the corvette.

The corvette was not five hundred yards from the shore, and about six miles from the strong town and citadel of Palais, which had some thirty odd years before stood a long siege, and was surrendered to the English on honourable terms, but was given up some few years afterwards.

The Babet's situation was in truth critical. On every side were ranges of rocks, all visible at low water, with a narrow gut, through which the vessel, singularly enough, had run in. Now, to work out through that narrow passage was quite impossible. It was to be done with a leading wind, certainly ; but the gale, though not direct in, would not permit a ship to lead out on one tack, and it blew much too strong to attempt to work through it. Already they could see numbers of persons assembled on the lofty rocks lining the shore. They were just within musket shot of the beach, and Captain O'Loughlin well knew that his party

of soldiers would soon arrive from the citadel of Palais, and open fire upon them from the rocks.

He was, however, determined to get rid of his prisoners, and accordingly landed them six at a time ; they were very unruly, and swore vehemently that the Babet should never leave that spot in the possession of the English.

Being able now to use all his crew, Captain O'Loughlin resolved to attempt to warp at high water into a berth from whence he might make sail ; but the fates appeared against the Babet. for just as her commander was preparing to make his hazardous attempt, the lofty spars of a large ship appeared round the north-east end of Belleisle, and in five minutes more a thirty-six gun frigate, with the tricolour flaunting in the gale, came rapidly into view, and seeing at once the situation of the corvette, taking her for a French ship, she lay to, and commenced hoisting out her boats. As she was doing so, the Vengeance ran up along-side of her, and then the corvette's real character became known, and immediately one of the boats with a flag of truce pulled in for her.

Captain O'Loughlin was deeply chagrined ; resistance was totally out of the question ; and added to his great vexation was the thought that the ladies on board, as well as his friend Thornton's little charge, would fall into the hands of the Revolutionary party. Madame Volney and her daughters were in terrible despair ; they saw that Captain O'Loughlin suffered intensely, and being unable to express in French what he felt and wished to advise, rendered him even more miserable. But just as the boat had come within hail of the corvette, a gun from the French ship and a signal run up to the mast-head, caused them, to the extreme surprise of Captain O'Loughlin, to at once turn back, and lower the flag of truce.

"What's in the wind now?" exclaimed Captain O'Loughlin. "Be the powers of war, Mr. Pearson," addressing his first mate, "there goes the frigate and the lugger, the lugger bang in amongst the Cardinal Rocks, and the frigate standing right across us. Lie down, quick!" he shouted to the men, as he cast a glance round ; "she is going to fire!"

As he spoke an iron shower passed partly over them, wounding two men, and cutting the Babet's rigging in many places into shreds. The next instant she was plunging into the head sea without the island. This seeming mystery was soon explained, for the tall masts of another large ship were seen rounding the point, and soon the sails and hull of an English frigate came into view. A loud and triumphant cheer burst from the crew of the Babet, and in a moment the English ensign was waving from her mast-head. The English frigate was about half a mile from the shore ; and as the wind then blew she could lie along

the coast of Belleisle, and gain the open sea on rounding the eastern side. She was evidently following the French frigate, and both were seeking the open sea, probably to attack each other; for in the confined space between Belleisle, the Cardinal Rocks, and the banks and shoals lying off the mouth of the Loire, it would have been impossible, as the wind then blew, to manœuvre two frigates with any degree of safety.

As soon as the English ship beheld the Babet, a signal was run up at her mast-head, requiring to know her name. This was answered, and several other signals followed. Captain O'Loughlin thus learned that the British frigate was the *Iris*, thirty-two guns, the French ship the *Citoyenne-Française*; but in a quarter of an hour the former disappeared, standing out to sea on the same tack as the Frenchman.

"Now, my lads," said Captain O'Loughlin, cheerfully, "we must get out of this place as fast as possible; the wind favours us a point or two since morning, so just be quick. Splice and knot the rigging, and we will attempt the passage before they can send any troops from Palais to pepper us."

Madame Volney, her daughters, and Mabel became inspired with fresh hope, when almost on the brink of despair. Having repaired the rigging, a boat's crew put an anchor in a position that would enable them to set sail, when warped up to it. With his glass, Captain O'Loughlin could discern a body of men coming along the heights: these he supposed to be soldiers from Palais; but the Babet was soon warped to her berth, and, aided by the shift of wind, she ran safely out under double-reefed topsails, and then tacking, stood out to sea on the same board as the *Iris* frigate;* and three days afterwards, to the intense joy of our hero, and also of all on board the Babet, she ran into Plymouth alongside the *Bon-Citoyen* schooner.

CHAPTER XII.

SIR GODFREY EThERTON, eight or ten days after the arrival of the Babet in Plymouth, received a letter from Mr. Joseph Stanmore, solicitor. The Baronet was in his study when the letter arrived; he opened it with some surprise and curiosity, for he did not know the writing, and perused the following lines:—

* The *Iris* afterwards engaged the *Citoyenne-Française*, and after an obstinate contest, the French ship, her masts standing, got away, and ran into the Bourdeaux river. The *Iris* lost her foremast, main-topmast, and mizen; the French frigate had her captain and fifteen officers and seamen killed.

"London, ——— Square,
"January 21st, 1794.

"Sir,—

"I beg to acquaint you with the arrival in London of your niece, Miss Mabel Arden, who is at present residing with a French lady, the widow of Admiral Volney, a fugitive or emigrant from her native country, and who has kindly taken charge of Miss Arden, for a short period. I have also to state that a young gentleman, an officer in the naval service, has placed in my hands a sealed casket, which he received from Miss Arden's mother, the Duchesse de Coulancourt, with an injunction for it to be opened in his presence and that of Miss Arden's nearest relative, which I understand you are. Any further particulars I will defer till I have the pleasure of seeing you, which I hope will be as soon as may be convenient.

"I have the honour to be,

"Yours most obediently,

"JOSEPH STANMORE."

Sir Godfrey Etherton read this letter twice, and looked very serious, as he muttered half aloud—

"So she is come at last."

He remained thoughtful some time; then, rising, he proceeded to the drawing-room, where Lady Etherton and two of her youngest daughters were sitting near a blazing fire.

"I have just received intelligence," commenced the Baronet, "that Miss Arden has arrived in London."

"Oh, indeed!" returned Lady Etherton, whilst the two girls, both very plain, but very fashionably dressed in the ugly style of the period, looked up from their fancy work.

"I wonder what she is like?" said Miss Jane to her sister Barbara. "Howard said she was such a puny thing, that she would hardly live to reach England."

"It's very obvious," said her mother, "that she has lived, nevertheless. I suppose, Godfrey, you will have to go to London, and bring her here; the weather is very severe for so long a journey." Even from Southampton to London, sixty years ago, was called a long journey. Oh, steam and rail, what a different world you have made of it! Who can tell, in sixty years more, but that steam and rail will be looked upon as slow coaches are now-a-days?

"Yes," replied Sir Godfrey, handing the letter to his spouse, "I must set out to-morrow. I shall not require you to accompany me; but I will take Jane, to keep the child in countenance and companionship."

"I wonder if her mother still exists?" said Lady Etherton.

"Not very likely," answered the Baronet, "in the state

France is, that any titled aristocrat would escape, though by birth an Englishwoman. But it's strange that Mrs. Arden—or the Duchesse de Coulancourt—should in a manner confide her child and a valuable casket, no doubt, to the care of a boy.”

“And a boy of no family or connection,” remarked Lady Etherton, laying down the lawyer's letter.

“That is of very little consequence now,” Sir Godfrey replied, and, turning to his daughters, said, “You had better, Jane, make some arrangements for to-morrow; I shall leave early, so that we may reach London in good time the following day.”

The two girls then left the room.

“It has just struck me,” remarked the Baronet, “that as this child is, no doubt, totally uneducated, whether it will not be better to place her in some first-rate establishment for the education of young ladies, than to bring her here. For several reasons I think that would be the best plan, as all our girls are finished off, and to bring a governess again into the house would be unpleasant.”

“You might do so in the spring,” returned Lady Etherton; “but for appearance sake I think she had better come here for a few months. I wonder greatly what is in the casket?”

“Some family jewels, I suppose,” replied the Baronet; “perhaps some papers to prove the child's birth, &c. But I forgot to mention to you that I saw in the Plymouth paper an account of a spirited action fought by the corvette that brought Miss Arden to England with two French privateers. She took one, a very large schooner, which it seems was brought to Plymouth by this young midshipman, William Thornton. The corvette had scarcely half her armament, and it is stated only forty-five men on board at the time. Now, this midshipman has attracted great attention; his gallantry during the action, and the fact of his having shot the captain of the privateer at a critical moment, and also having brought the prize home safely, notwithstanding some tremendous gales, has caused him to be highly spoken of. Even Admiral B—— has taken notice of him, and I think it extremely probable that he will be made a lieutenant at once, without waiting the expiration of his time.”

“Hem, indeed!” returned Lady Etherton, with a contemptuous look and manner. “This boy seems to be fortune's favourite—a lucky chance, I suppose. I dare say, if Howard had had the opportunity, he would have done equally well.”

“Of course he would,” returned the Baronet, confidently. “However, Howard shall not want either an opportunity or the means of distinguishing himself when the time comes. It is very clear every one cannot have the chance at the same time, or the service would be overrun with young heroes.”

"Well," observed the mother, "I am sure, when the time does come, my son will not be behind-hand in spirit or ability," and so the conversation ended.

Everything being prepared for a journey, Sir Godfrey Etherton and his daughter Jane took their departure in the family chariot with post horses. A journey from the family mansion to London, in those not very remote days, required nevertheless a whole twenty-four hours. On reaching town, our travellers took up their abode at Pierce's hotel. Now, Jane Etherton was extremely anxious to see this little Mabel Arden; though she considered her a mere child, still she created a kind of excitement in her mind. Jane Etherton was not a handsome girl, and, we regret to add, by no means an amiable one; about twenty years of age, rather tall and slight in person, and vain and selfish in disposition; whilst her manner was extremely arrogant and overbearing to all she considered her inferiors, and to those of her own rank and station in life she was stiff and often supercilious. She had heard her mother say that the unexpected turning up of Miss Arden would materially diminish hers and her sister's fortunes, as their father would be obliged to refund a very large sum which Miss Arden, as the daughter of Mr. Granby Arden, would by right inherit—Sir Godfrey being quite ignorant that his brother had ever married: therefore the unexpected appearance of this little girl was a most disagreeable event.

"But," continued the mother, "we may consider it a most fortunate circumstance that Miss Arden, who had a brother, alone lives to claim the inheritance. Her brother was beheaded, she asserts, somewhere in France, during the convulsions that overthrew the French monarchy: otherwise we should have lost not only the estate but the title."

We cannot vouch for the fact, but it was said that Miss Jane observed that it was a great pity something of the same kind did not happen to Miss Arden; for it was too bad to have to give up property so long considered her own. We presume, therefore, though Miss Jane was a little curious to see Mabel, she was not prepared to regard or receive her with any very kindly or cousinly feeling.

The day following the arrival of Sir Godfrey Etherton in London, he dispatched a note to Mr. Stanmore, the solicitor, appointing an hour on the next day for a meeting. If the time was not convenient, he requested the solicitor to name his hour; requesting also to know where he should find Miss Arden.

A polite answer was returned, stating that the time mentioned by the Baronet was quite convenient, and that Miss Arden was residing for the time with Madame Volney, who

had rented a detached cottage at Brompton, No. 7, East End Terrace.

On consideration, Sir Godfrey deferred visiting Madame Volney till after his interview with Mr. Stanmore; so at the appointed hour he proceeded to the solicitor's residence. The Baronet was shown into a handsome sitting-room, where he beheld Mr. Stanmore and two gentlemen, to whom the Baronet was introduced by the solicitor, first to Lieutenant O'Loughlin, and then to William Thornton, saying—

"This is the young midshipman who has acted so kindly and gallantly towards your niece, Miss Arden."

The Baronet first bowed politely to Lieutenant O'Loughlin, though wondering why that gentleman should be present; but when face to face with our hero he scarcely bent his head, and the expression of his countenance was haughty, if not contemptuous. A careless smile passed over the midshipman's very handsome and prepossessing countenance as he perceived the change of expression in Sir Godfrey's features when introduced to him; but the solicitor, who also marked the change, looked serious.

"I have wished Lieutenant O'Loughlin," said Mr. Stanmore, addressing Sir Godfrey, "to be present at the opening of this casket," directing the baronet's attention to that article lying on the table, "because Lord Hood mentioned in his letter to me that, considering the youth of Mr. Thornton, he had better be accompanied to London by his friend Lieutenant O'Loughlin, who would have, conjointly with Master Thornton, the care of the casket. Acquainted with this proceeding on the part of Lord Hood, I considered it my duty to secure the presence of Mr. O'Loughlin on the occasion of this meeting."

"I can see no objection," said Sir Godfrey; "but I think Lord Hood might have dispensed with the services of so young a lad as Master Thornton altogether."

This was said in an ungracious tone, and O'Loughlin's cheek flushed as he retorted rather sharply—

"Faith! Sir Godfrey, perhaps his services in saving mother and daughter's life might equally be dispensed with. As I find——"

The lawyer coughed, fidgeted about, and, seeing a dark frown on Sir Godfrey's brow, interrupted the worthy lieutenant by saying—

"Excuse me, gentlemen, but business is business; we will at once open the casket, and see to its contents."

Approaching the table, he took it up, remarking that it was heavy.

The casket was evidently of Indian workmanship, beautifully put together; the sides and edges inlaid with silver, richly

engraved with various curious hieroglyphics. A large massive wax seal, bearing the arms of the Duchesse de Coulaucourt, covered the key-hole.

"You may perceive, Sir Godfrey," remarked the solicitor, "that this seal is perfect in all its parts?"

"Undoubtedly," returned the baronet; "it could not be otherwise in honourable hands."

"I can assure you, Sir Godfrey," said Lieutenant O'Loughlin, coldly, "that my gallant young friend perilled his life to preserve that casket, and there was no fear of any one tampering with it whilst under my care."

Sir Godfrey bowed, observing, "It was fortunate his niece had had such able protectors of both her person and her property."

Mr. Stanmore, who did not admire either the tone or the look of the baronet, and who could very well judge of the feelings of the two young men, hastened to break the seal. William Thornton, with a look not particularly conciliating at Sir Godfrey, handed the key, which was of rather curious construction. This the solicitor inserted, turned the lock, and then threw up the lid, all present naturally leaning forward, feeling some little curiosity concerning its contents.

Each naturally expected to behold jewels of great value and diamonds; what they first beheld were shavings. These appeared a rather strange packing material for a rich jewel case; but supposing that the Duchess, in her extremity, could find no other, these were carefully removed, when, to their intense mortification, surprise, and indignation, nothing was found but pieces of old worn lead wrapped in pieces of old sacking or canvas. The four spectators remained for several moments gazing at each other, unable to utter a word.

Sir Godfrey Etherton was the first to recover from the surprise all felt. He started to his feet, his sallow cheek flushed and his eyes glistening with the feeling of unaccountable relief, and even of triumph. What cared he for the poor child thus left penniless?

"Ah!" he exclaimed, not trying to conceal the joy he felt, or the triumphant tone of his voice; "so this is the end of our investigation. I thought from the first the whole story was a trumped up one, and that this supposed Duchess of Coulaucourt was some artificial adventurer and her daughter."

"Hold, sir, and take care what you say!" interrupted O'Loughlin, the fierce, angry flash from his dark eyes telling how strong was the struggle within that hindered him from felling the Baronet at his feet, whilst William Thornton could hardly contain himself. "How, Sir Godfrey," continued the Lieutenant, checking his rage, "can you presume to call the

Duchess of Coulancourt an adventuress, because this casket, be it how it may, has been tampered with?"

"Sir," returned the Baronet, with a dark frown, gazing fiercely at the Lieutenant, and his lip trembling with passion, "I am not answerable to you, or any man, for my words; I am, however, responsible for the honour of my family. I was invited here, and I came expecting to receive proofs of a child of my brother's—a lawful child, mind you—born in wedlock; when at the same time I felt fully convinced that my brother never was married, even though my Lord Hood appears to say to the contrary, but who cannot say who his wife was, or whether—— Pray hear me to the end, Lieutenant O'Loughlin," continued the Baronet, waving his hand, seeing the angry impatience of the honest sailor. "Lord Hood is depending on reports; I cannot depend on any such foundation. I am quite willing to listen to reason, or to do my duty, provided I am satisfied with the proofs put before me; but you or any one else may depend I will not consent to rob my children of their rightful inheritance, without some substantial evidence of birth, marriage, &c. This young man," continued the Baronet, turning with a look of fierce hatred towards William—(neither O'Loughlin nor the solicitor interrupted him, waiting patiently till he had ceased speaking)—"this young man is introduced into the presence of a female, apparently hiding—from whom—who can say? Seeing how young and inexperienced was the person introduced to her, she declares herself to be a Duchess, thinking this high title would impose——"

"You are going too far, Sir Godfrey Etherton," interrupted William Thornton, losing all patience; his features flushed with excitement as he confronted the Baronet, and their eyes met. "I will not stand here, quiescent, to hear a noble lady and her unfortunate child so grossly maligned and insulted. You have, no doubt, received a false statement of facts from your son, Howard Etherton——"

The Baronet, one of the most excitable and passionate men breathing, lost all control over a temper that had rendered his name one of detestation in the naval service of his country.

"How dare you!" fiercely interrupted Sir Godfrey, stamping on the floor with rage. "You, the son of a common seaman, dare to accuse my son of giving false statements! You forget, boy, to whom you speak!"

The Baronet felt a grasp upon his shoulder that turned him round face to face with the excited O'Loughlin, whilst poor Mr. Stanmore, a quiet and rather timid man, looked and felt extremely miserable and uneasy.

"Ah," he thought to himself, "these sons of the ocean are

terribly fiery; better use the pen than the sword—a much safer weapon!”

“Sir Godfrey Etherton,” said the Lieutenant, speaking calmly, though he trembled with passion; “why I have not felled you to my feet, I cannot say! You are no longer on the quarter-deck of the Dauntless, where your passions found vent upon the victims your anger selected. You here, in your supposed triumph in ousting a poor child out of its parents’ heritage, hurl insult upon the head of an unfortunate lady, and dare to call your brother’s wife an impostor and an adventuress!”

“I will listen no more to this tirade!” furiously exclaimed the Baronet, seizing his hat; and as he reached the door he turned, and shaking his clenched hand at O’Loughlin, he added: “You shall hear from me, Mr. O’Loughlin; and as to this farce of a niece, I disclaim all relationship, and leave to those who have trumped up this deception the right to make the most of their ill got-up project.” So saying, the Baronet slammed the door after him.

The worthy solicitor leaned back in his chair, exclaiming—

“God bless me, I’m glad he’s gone!”

“Faith, so am I,” said O’Loughlin, wiping his brow; “for if he had remained only two minutes more, he should have vanished through the window!”

“This is too bad,” exclaimed William Thornton. “What a heartless, worldly-minded man!”

“Oh, confound him, don’t bother about him; we’ll defeat him yet; and by Jove, if he only gives me a chance, which I am afraid he will not, I’ll make him remember O’Loughlin.”

Mr. Stanmore, who began to recover his presence of mind, and his thoughts reverting to the casket, and its strange contents of shavings, rags, and leads, said—

“Now, Lieutenant O’Loughlin, that that peppery Baronet is gone—he quite bewildered me,” added the solicitor, “let us think about this strange affair. The poor little girl is now actually left without her natural protectors.”

“Natural! do you call them?” replied O’Loughlin, who kept pacing the room to cool himself, whilst William Thornton was examining the casket and the lock. “I call him the most unnatural beast I ever met with; a dead match for a crocodile I once saw on the banks of the Nile, making a breakfast off half-a-dozen of his own progeny.”

“But, O’Loughlin,” said William Thornton, “there is something very mysterious in all this. I am perfectly convinced that the Duchesse de Coulancourt never gave me this casket, knowing it to contain those articles on the table; but, indeed,

Mr. Stanmore, we ought to beg your pardon for thus giving way to our hasty tempers."

"Why, so we ought," said the Lieutenant; "but, tare and ouns, William, was I to stand silently by, hearing that Baronet calling you the son of a—hem—and I knowing you to be the son of Sir Oscar de Bracy."

Mr. Stanmore looked up amazed at hearing William Thornton called the son of Sir Oscar de Bracy; he, however, merely said—

"Let us calmly look into this mysterious affair. I am satisfied myself that the original contents of that casket have been removed, and that rubbish substituted."

O'Loughlin started, saying—

"That is not possible; you saw the seal unbroken."

"Yes, yes," said the solicitor; "there are more ways of opening caskets than with the key," and then he rang the bell, and ordered the servant who answered the summons to tell his housekeeper to send up wine and refreshments. Now, I beg you, Mr. Thornton," continued the solicitor, addressing our hero, "I pray you to recall every circumstance that occurred after receiving the casket, for it may be quite possible that the contents might have been extracted previous to your receiving it from her hands."

"No, Mr. Stanmore," returned the midshipman, "not previously, of that I am confident, and I will tell you my reason for being so. When introduced into the chamber where I first saw the Duchess of Coulancourt, and whilst conversing with her, I observed that casket on the table; the lid was up, and though I could not, or indeed thought of trying to inspect the contents, still I can safely say there were no shavings whatever in it. I observed her close the lid, lock it, and then affix the seal, after doing which she gave me the key; therefore, the Duchess could not have been deceived. Whilst conducting Miss Arden through the streets, several ruffians made efforts to get it from me, but they failed."

"Afterwards," inquired Mr. Stanmore, "what did you do with the casket; that is, when you got back to the boats?"

"I still held possession of it," said the midshipman, "till we all got on board the dismasted frigate, where we were to remain for some hours, and where the Commissioners had prepared refreshments for us. Poor Mabel was so fatigued and overcome, that I begged her to lie down in a berth. I placed the casket at the foot of the berth, covered it over, and found it in the same place when we had directions to return to our ships."

"How long, Master Thornton," questioned Mr. Stanmore, "do you think the casket remained in the berth with the little girl?"

"Oh! I should say several hours, from three or four o'clock in the day till ten at night; we could not venture to cross the outward harbour till dark. I examined the casket when I took it up, and Mabel said she had not been disturbed by any one."

"Nevertheless," observed Mr. Stanmore, rising and ringing the bell, and then taking up the casket he began carefully to examine it, "it is possible it may have been tampered with during those hours. I feel satisfied that shavings and lead were not its original contents, and that those contents could not be changed without hands. I am anxious to investigate the mystery as fully as possible. You see, Lieutenant O'Loughlin, it is beautifully put together, and all the edges clasped with silver plates," and turning it up, he keenly examined the bottom, which had no plate of any kind across it.

"There does not appear the slightest indication of any attempt at opening it," observed the Lieutenant, carefully scrutinising it.

"I am not so sure of that," said the solicitor; "but I will have a keener eye to examine into this, and one accustomed to these kinds of things, and who has often been employed to detect dexterous burglaries. Ah! here is John," and turning to his servant, he desired him to go across the street and request Mr. Robins, the jeweller, to come to him for a few minutes, and to bring one or two of his spring saws with him.

The two young sailors wondered what Mr. Stanmore expected to find, but the worthy solicitor remarked to William Thornton—

"When on board the frigate in Toulon, who did you see there; were there many persons about?"

"No, Mr. Stanmore, there were not; for after the committee men left, there was only the steward, three or four sailors, and about as many convicts or galley slaves, who were at liberty about the ship with only an iron ring round their ankles; but they did not come into the after cabins."

"Ah! here is Mr. Robins," observed Mr. Stanmore, as the jeweller entered the room, bowed to the gentlemen present, and at once fixed a remarkably keen pair of grey eyes upon the casket.

"Ah! Mr. Robins," said the solicitor; "I see your eyes are upon this casket," laying his hand on it.

"Yes," replied Mr. Robins, taking it up; "an Indian cabinet or casket, beautifully put together, and yet by no means a particularly safe article for holding valuables; for though exquisitely worked, and the edges all clasped and riveted, there is no security in the bottoms."

"Ah! so I thought," said Mr. Stanmore; and then he

briefly explained how he suspected the contents of the casket to have been stolen, without breaking the seal over the key-hole.

"Nothing more easy," remarked the jeweller, "to an expert burglar, with a watch-spring saw—the bottom has been taken out;" and drawing from his pocket a small case, he selected a remarkably fine blade of a knife, and began passing it along the edge or sides till the knife stopped.

"Ah," he continued, with a satisfied smile, "I see: a watch-spring saw, exceedingly fine, has been used here to cut the small pins holding the bottom to the sides," and taking one of those instruments he passed it all round, finding only four pins and a powerful cement. He soon freed the bottom, and then all plainly perceived it had been previously held to the sides by twelve steel pins, which had been all sawed, the contents abstracted, and the bottom cleverly replaced, and four very small iron brads used to fasten it, and then cement put along the edges.

"By Jove! that's it," said O'Loughlin, "there's no mistake. This job was done on board that confounded ship whilst Mabel slept."

"Yes," replied Mr. Stanmore, excessively chagrined, whilst William Thornton's face flushed with vexation.

"Ah!" remarked the jeweller, "some of those French convicts are most expert burglars."

"No doubt," observed Mr. Stanmore, addressing William Thornton, "you were observed carrying the casket and watched, and whilst the tired little girl slept and you obtained refreshment, the theft was committed."

"If you look at the lead," said Mr. Robins, who had examined it, "you will easily see it is the lead used for ships' scuppers, put in to make the weight up. Less than an hour to an expert hand would complete the job, if provided with a watch-saw and a piece of wax."

Mr. Robins, having partaken of a glass or two of wine, then retired.

"This is a sad misfortune for the little girl," said Mr. Stanmore, feelingly. "I could very well perceive Sir Godfrey was exceedingly rejoiced to get rid of his relationship to Miss Arden. No doubt she has a large claim upon the estate, as Mr. Granby Arden's only child."

"Sir Godfrey Etherton," observed William Thornton, with great bitterness, "may yet be made sorely to repent his almost brutal cruelty to his lawful niece. Besides, it is by no means certain that her brother is dead; and, if he still exists, he will strip this proud and heartless man of both title and fortune. In the meantime, Mr Stanmore, something must be

done for Miss Arden, till her mother, the Duchess of Coulan-court, can get to this country."

"I shall be most happy to assist you in any way, Master Thornton," observed the solicitor.

"Well, then, Mr. Stanmore," continued our hero, "as she cannot remain a burden upon Madame Volney, whose means are limited, I should wish her to be placed in one of the best establishments for young ladies in the vicinity of London, and no pains spared in her education. I can place six hundred pounds prize-money in your hands for that purpose, and I am quite satisfied Madame Volney will pay her every attention till her mother arrives."

"You're a jewel of a boy, by my conscience you are!" exclaimed Lieutenant O'Loughlin, vehemently, and claspings his favourite by the hand; "and, harkee! Mr. Stanmore, I'll place the same sum in your hands, and that will make a clear twelve hundred for the little girl, and last her till, please the Fates! we knock double the amount out of Monsieur Crapeau."

Mr. Stanmore was much moved by the simple, noble conduct of the two sailors; he remarked that he had two daughters at school with a most talented and highly-educated lady, who received only a few pupils, and resided about fifteen miles out of London. By this lady Miss Arden would have every kindness shown her, and have the very best masters.

"Now, I have a couple of hours' business to transact, but I shall expect you both to dinner; and, after that very necessary daily occupation is over, we shall have full time to settle everything."

The two friends, somewhat reconciled to their mishap in the loss of the contents of the casket, though desperately indignant at Sir Godfrey's conduct, then shook the solicitor heartily by the hand, and departed to pay a visit to the Volneys.

CHAPTER XIII.

THREE years have passed since the events recorded in our last chapter took place; and, at the end of that period we find our hero, whom we must still style William Thornton, third Lieutenant of the Diamond frigate, commanded by his sincere friend Captain Sir Sidney Smith. To add to his pleasure at this appointment, procured through the interest of Lord Hood, his attached friend and companion, Patrick O'Loughlin, was first Lieutenant of the same ship. Our hero had passed an examination with considerable credit. The Diamond frigate was

ordered to cruise off Brest, in company with the *Flora* and the *Arethusa*. Before we proceed with our story, we will briefly record the events of the three years, so far as they biassed the fortunes of our hero.

Having received the prize-money due to him from the capture of the *Bon-Citoyen*, William Thornton placed it under the control of Mr. Stanmore, for the benefit of Mabel Arden, Lieutenant O'Loughlin insisting on giving a similar sum.

"You shall repay me," said the generous sailor, when our hero remonstrated, "when the little girl becomes your wife, and she regains her rights."

"But, my dear friend," replied our hero, "that event is not likely to occur. I love the dear child as a sister, and will protect her as long as she requires a protector; but I am not at all in love; and certainly a little girl, not quite thirteen, and not very beautiful, is not very likely to create the tender passion such as the fair Agatha inspires in the bosom of my gallant friend."

"Oh! bother about tender passion: wait a bit," said the Lieutenant; "in the meantime let the thing be as we have fixed it, and let us turn your attention to making inquiries about my dear benefactor, Sir Oscar de Bracy."

Mr. Stanmore was made their confidant in this affair also. He listened with great patience, and agreed that it appeared extremely probable that William Thornton was, in fact, Sir Oscar de Bracy's son, at the same time taking down all the dates and names and particulars they both could give him. He then told them they must allow him time—a few days—to make inquiries.

During that period, Mabel Arden had become acquainted with Mr. Stanmore's amiable daughters. Rose, the youngest, was just a year older than Mabel, and at once she took a great fancy to her. Mabel was charmed with the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Stanmore and family. When informed of the conduct of Sir Godfrey Etherton, she only expressed her bitter regret that her dear, kind-hearted brother William should suffer such haughty treatment and indignity on her account. As to the contents of the casket, she was positive her mother had placed in it cases of valuable jewels, and many most important papers; but she still hoped her dear mother would yet arrive, and prove to the cold-hearted Sir Godfrey Etherton that he had cruelly wronged her.

Mrs. Samson's establishment for young ladies, where the Misses Stanmore were to proceed in a few days with Mabel, was situated near Windsor.

Mabel burst into tears when she heard of William Thorn-

ton's and Lieutenant O'Loughlin's generosity. She felt their kindness deeply; it made a strong and forcible impression on her most affectionate nature.

Madame Volney and her daughters were most comfortably located, and promised not to lose sight of Mabel, and it was arranged she should spend her holidays alternately with them and the Stanmores.

Agatha Volney had really become attached to the handsome and generous O'Loughlin. She had studied English so successfully, and the French with such assiduity, that, before they left London, Patrick O'Loughlin declared French to be the most delightful language for making love in the world.

"I have tried love-making, my boy," he exclaimed to our hero, "in Irish, in English, and without speaking any language at all; but, be the pipers of war! give me French from this night."

"Ah!" replied the midshipman, laughing, "wait till you have a trial in Italian—that's the sweet language for love."

"Oh, bother!" returned the Lieutenant, "I'm settled for life. She's promised to marry me when I'm a post-captain."

"The deuce!" cried our hero, whistling. "Post-captain! Why, O'Loughlin, has the pretty Agatha taken a sudden fancy to grey whiskers?"

"Don't you imagine, my boy," said the Lieutenant, laughing, "that I am going to wait for that, with this fine, hot war. Wait awhile—we shall go to work directly."

Whilst Mr. Stanmore was making his inquiries concerning Sir Oscar de Bracy, William Thornton set out for a visit to the cottage of his generous and kind-hearted protector, the coxswain, there to remain a week with him. He found the old couple hale and hearty. The coxswain felt so proud of his adopted son, and so elated at his conduct during the time he had served with Lord Hood, that he swore roundly he was sure to be an admiral. The old man also felt intensely anxious concerning Mr. Stanmore's inquiries with respect to our hero's parentage.

He recollected very well, when he first saw the child on the deck of the *Surveillant* frigate, that the men said the boy's name was Oscar. Indeed the child, when questioned, lisped some kind of word like Oscar, but that he considered an outlandish name, and was sure it was not real, but some pet term; it was not ship-shape: so he called him William, after himself.

At the termination of a week, our hero returned to London, having received a letter from Lieutenant O'Loughlin, stating that he had been appointed First Lieutenant of the *Diamond* frigate, commanded by Sir Sidney Smith, who was very anxious to see him in London, and wished him to serve the rest of his

time as midshipman with him. This was agreeable tidings to our hero ; so, taking an affectionate leave of his early protector, he proceeded to London. Through Lord Hood's interest he got appointed to the *Diamond*. Whilst in London he was constantly at Madame Volney's. Mabel was at Mrs. Samson's ; no tidings of her mother having reached England had yet been received, which caused much uneasiness to the young man, as well as to his *protégée*, for he feared some untoward event had baffled Jean Plessis's endeavours to rescue the Duchess.

Mr. Stanmore was at length enabled to give our hero the result of his inquiries respecting Sir Oscar de Bracey.

"It appears," said the solicitor one day, when our hero was dining with him previous to his departure for Plymouth, where the *Diamond* frigate was stationed ; "it appears that Sir Oscar de Bracy is the last of a very old Irish family, who settled in that country about the time of Elizabeth, having conquered by the sword a large tract of territory in the west, and the head of that family was created a baronet by James the First.

"Since that period, from one cause or another, their fortunes have declined, and the property become divided, so that at present the family of de Bracy is represented only by Sir Oscar, the last male descendant of the Irish de Bracys. He had a sister, who is said to have died abroad when very young. Sir Oscar de Bracy and this sister, it seems, were left orphans, with only a small estate, near Bantry—I think about five hundred a year. The former became a commander in the navy, and, it is said, succeeded to a very large portion of the forfeited estates of the Kerry de Bracys—six or seven thousand a-year, I hear—by the death of a distant kinsman. Who he married I have not yet learned, now he is Governor of —, in India ; but is shortly expected home.

"I have ascertained, after some difficulty, that Lady de Bracy and her child embarked, with their attendants, in the *Spitfire* gun brig, to proceed to Plymouth, with the intention of going out to India in the *Penelope* frigate. But neither the brig, nor any human being belonging to her, was ever seen or heard of from the time she left Bantry. Now, by comparing dates, there appears to me no question in the world but that the *Spitfire* brig was the vessel run down by the French ship the *Surveillante*, and that you are the child saved in the long boat, jolly-boat, or whatever name you sailors give to those affairs. It would be amazingly satisfactory if we had that Lieutenant Volney's written statement, and the picture ; but as that is out of the question, I fear, we can only state facts as they are to Sir Oscar, when he arrives in England, and, no doubt, your likeness to him or your poor mother, or the proofs we can show, with old Thornton's statement, added to Madame

Volney's, will be quite sufficient to convince your father. Nature will do something."

Such was the substance of the information our hero received. He had only to remain patient, till time, which reconciles most things, should bring him and his father together. He, accordingly, shortly after, proceeded to Plymouth, and joined the *Diamond*, and, after three years' more service, he, as we said, passed his examination, and became third Lieutenant of the *Diamond*, and proceeded to cruise off Brest.

The last letters he had received were from Mr. Stanmore, stating that Sir Oscar had stepped, from ill-health, at the Cape; no tidings had been heard of the Dukes, and that Mabel Arden had grown into a lovely girl; that Sir Godfrey Etherton was dangerously ill, and that young Howard Etherton had quitted the service and returned home.

"Now, my lad," said his friend, Lieutenant O'Loughlin, "what do you say to that? Your little Mabel, whom you had the impudence to call plain, with eyes like a gazelle! Now, you see, she has turned out, what I always prophesied, a lovely girl. I am astonished at you! What's beauty! Faith, now I recollect, you were half in love with that——"

"Come, come, O'Loughlin," interrupted our hero, laughing, "do not think to have it all your own way. Perhaps if I were to give Agatha Volney a little sketch of a certain——"

"I cry quits," said the Lieutenant, with a smile; "but, by the way, Agatha's sister is going to be married shortly to young Lord Stinthrop—a splendid match. Madame Volney, fortunately, has been left a very handsome legacy by a relation who died out at Cuba, which places her in a position she is entitled to fill."

"I rejoice to hear it, old friend. Where did you get all this intelligence?"

"In letters brought out by the *Etna* gun-boat. We go out to the Mediterranean before we return to England, so that it may be some time before we receive news again."

One morning after this conversation, Sir Sidney Smith received orders from Sir John Borlase Warren, who commanded the force, to proceed with the *Diamond*, and have a look into Brest harbour. This order aroused the spirits and energies of the frigate's crew, because there was considerable risk in the undertaking. Anything but an inactive life for a British sailor.

The *Diamond* was accordingly disguised as much as possible, so as to resemble a French frigate.

With the wind blowing due east, the frigate commenced beating up for the entrance, and as it approached, the crew could perceive three French ships of war, also working up to windward. As the day declined, Sir Sidney made up his mind

to anchor, so as to be able to take advantage of the next flood tide. The frigate therefore let go her anchor between *Porte St. Matthew* and the *Bec-du-Rez*. Distant about two miles from them was perceived a large ship, and nearer to the *Bec-du-Rez* lay a remarkable looking vessel, lugger-rigged.

The moment William Thornton turned his glass upon this last-mentioned vessel, he said aloud:—

“By Jove! that’s her.”

“What is it, Thornton?” inquired Sir Sidney, coming to his side.

“I am sure I know that lugger, Sir Sidney,” replied our hero. “The light is fading away fast, still I am positive that vessel is the famous privateer, the *Vengeance*; the craft we fought when in the *Babet*, and when we took the *Bon-Citoyen* schooner.”

“The devil it is! I have heard a great deal of that lugger, which seems to defy all our cruisers, and has taken a number of prizes. I wish it were possible to cut her out, but we should be detected by that man-of-war close alongside her.”

“We should have taken her, sir, the time we were engaged with her and the schooner,” said our hero, “but for the dense fog; as it was, we knocked her main-mast out of her. The crew of the *Bon-Citoyen* said she belongs to Havre and that there’s not a craft afloat can touch her.”

“A very vain-glorious boast,” said Sir Sidney; “we may chance to catch hold of the fellow some day or other. We must be under weigh by eleven o’clock, for the flood-tide will have made by that time.”

“There’s another large ship, sir, further up; but she is not distinctly visible, being partly behind the point.”

“Oh, we will have a look at her,” returned Sir Sidney.

By twelve o’clock the *Diamond* was again under weigh, and, with easy sail, continued working up the noble inlet forming the many harbours designated as Brest. On nearing the ship at anchor, they could make her out to be a ship of the line; still they created no suspicion.

“By my conscience,” said O’Loughlin to our hero, as they paced the deck, “we are making free and easy with the enemy’s port; if that big fellow yonder only knew who we were, wouldn’t it wake him out of his sleep!”

“The very daringness of the thing, our so coolly sailing up into the very heart of this vast port, lulls suspicion,” remarked our hero; “for if the slightest idea was entertained, they could blow us out of the water, from the forts on each side.”

“We shall pass close to that other frigate, William, at anchor within there; but the ebb will make before we get much further.”

"I wish we could just give that lugger a shot, *en passant*," said our hero.

"Ah, mon ami," replied Lieutenant O'Loughlin, "now we have other fish to fry."

The Diamond continued under weigh till daylight appeared, and then could be discerned two ships coming through the Geulet (as it is called) de Brest, and in Cameret Road could be counted fifteen small craft at anchor, and a large ship aground on Menow point.

About eight o'clock in the morning, Sir Sidney, having surveyed all round with his glass, declared that there were no ships of war in Brest Road; the Diamond, therefore, was kept away towards St. Mathieu.

"Now, by Jove!" said Lieutenant O'Loughlin, "will be the tug of war; depend on it we shall be challenged by yonder fort."

"That is the Chateau de Bertheaume," observed our hero, who, an hour before, had been studying the chart of Brest harbour. "Ah! there go the signals."

All hands were on the alert on board the Diamond, and up went the national colours of France in the frigate. As they stood in, a French corvette, sailing along Bertheaume Bay, seemed not to admire the appearance of the Diamond, or, at all events, to become suspicious, for several signals were hoisted, and she hauled in close under the Chateau.

The Diamond was now compelled to pass within hail of the French line-of-battle ship, which was under jury-masts, yards, and top-masts, but did not appear to have any main-deck guns, whilst the crew seemed remarkably busy at the pumps, the ship evidently leaking much.

Sir Sidney, who knew Lieutenant Thornton spoke French exceedingly well, desired him to hail, and ask the French Commander if he required assistance. This was done, and the reply was "No." They said the ship was the Nestor, which had been dismasted in a gale of wind, and had parted from the fleet twenty-seven days before.

The Diamond then crowded all sail, and, notwithstanding her perilous situation, got clear away in broad daylight, and before mid-day joined her consort, the Arethusa.

This happened in the month of January; and, during the two following months, the Diamond and Arethusa took several valuable prizes. In one, in the month of March, Lieutenant O'Loughlin was sent to England with despatches, whilst the Diamond proceeded to cruise along the French coast.

About the middle of April, Sir Sidney stood in, and came to an anchor in the outer road of Havre. He was induced to do so from our hero having caught sight, during the previous

night, of a large lugger creeping along shore, evidently intending to make Havre.

Lieutenant Thornton fancied that this large lugger might be his old antagonist, the *Vengeance*, which belonged to that port; they had heard from the captain of an English brig, some days before, that a French privateer, lugger-rigged, and full of men, had captured a large Sunderland barque, and, after plundering her, had tried to scuttle her; but, seeing an armed brig and two cutters coming up from the westward, had made sail. Luckily, the crew of the barque contrived to stop the leaks, and steered for the nearest port.

It was about an hour after sunrise when the *Diamond* anchored, and at once Lieutenant Thornton made out the lugger at anchor in the inner road.

"Do you think it is the *Vengeance*?" said the Commander of the *Diamond* to our hero, who was regarding her with his glass.

"I'll swear to her," said the Lieutenant; "she has a new mainmast and main lug, and a new mizen mast, and I know we knocked the old one out and damaged her mizen."

"Then I will cut her out," said Sir Sidney, "to-night. I wish O'Loughlin was here; however I will take the command of the boats myself; you shall lead with the launch, into which I will put an 18-pounder carronade.*

It is rather unusual for a commander, on such an occasion, to take the command of the boats; but Sir Sidney had a gallant and daring spirit.

The second Lieutenant was therefore left with the master, who was a most excellent pilot, to take charge of the frigate.

This was an expedition that delighted our young Lieutenant, and excited all on board. Bill Saunders, who followed our hero like a shadow, and who had shipped on board the *Diamond* the moment he heard of Lieutenant Thornton's appointment, was one of the crew of the launch, and in high glee. Bill was a special favourite with officers and men, for he was not only a first-rate seaman, but always steady and sober, as fond of a lark as a boy, but knew when to enjoy one without infringing on his duty.

There were five boats in all, and in number about fifty-two men, but, excepting the launch, the boats had only muskets. Sir Sidney himself embarked in a two-oared wherry.

It was very little after ten o'clock when the expedition pushed off from the side of the *Diamond*. Sir Sidney had in the wherry with him a young midshipman named Beecroft, and in the launch with our hero was another midshipman named

* Fact.

Westly Wright. The night was extremely calm, but not very dark; they could see the shore of the Seine on both sides and the lights in the town of Havre.

Sir Sidney led the boats, however, in the wherry; and having pulled on in regular order till perfectly in sight of the lugger, they all paused till their Commander should fix upon the mode of attack.

"It is a hazardous exploit, Mr. Thornton," said the midshipman sitting beside our hero, "for our Commander to lead in this affair; should anything happen, the Diamond is in a precarious position."

"Her master is an able pilot," returned Lieutenant Thornton, "and I trust nothing will happen to our high-spirited and most kind-hearted Commander, though I confess I wish there was a breeze, if it was ever so light, for the tide is beginning to make up the river."

The wherry rode up, and Sir Sidney ordered the boats to take a broad steer between the shore and the lugger, so as to assume the appearance of fishing-boats coming out of the harbour.

This they accordingly did; and the ruse succeeded, or what is more probable, a bad look-out was kept on board the Vengeance, but the boats finally made for the object of their attack without any symptoms of their being noticed. Our hero resolved to reserve his fire until the lugger should open upon them. They had reached to within pistol-shot, when a wreath of smoke curled out from the lugger's side, and a shower of grape passed over the boats, tearing up the water, splintering the side of the launch, and wounding two men.

"Now, my lads," exclaimed our hero, "pepper them! And stand by, Bill Saunders, ready to grapple her."

"Aye, aye, sir; we must not let her go this time."

The next minute they were alongside; and springing upon the deck, boarding her on the quarter, our hero encountered Sir Sidney, coming aft, having boarded her from the bow. After a ten minutes' conflict, the lugger's crew surrendered, but the first mate stole forward, and with an axe cut the cable. This was not perceived for a moment, till Bill Saunders came running up, saying:—

"She's adrift, sir, and fast going towards the shore."

"Then hunt for an anchor and let go, Bill," cried the young lieutenant, going aft to speak to Sir Sidney, who was talking to the Captain, Auguste Baptiste Gaudet, a tall powerful man, with a remarkably repulsive countenance.

"This gentleman," said Sir Sidney, laying his hand on our hero's arm, and little thinking how destructive and dangerous those words would prove to his officer; "this gentleman very

nearly captured you once before, when you lost your main mast."

"*Sacre dieu*—what!" exclaimed the privateer Captain, "was it Monsieur who took the *Bon-Citoyen*?"

"Yes," returned Sir Sidney, "and shot her captain also."

"*Sacre diable*!" muttered the Captain, with a savage scowl, which neither our hero nor Sir Sidney saw or noticed, for both were anxiously regarding their then critical situation.

"I shall return on board the *Diamond*," said Sir Sidney; "do you order the boats ahead, and set all the sail you can on the lugger, put the prisoners into the boats, and send them ashore at Harfleur."

"There's not an anchor in the craft," said Bill Saunders to our hero, after Sir Sidney had left.

But just then one of the men shouted out that they had found a small kedge, which was accordingly let go, when they discovered that neither the boats ahead nor the sails would move the lugger against the strong flood tide making up the river Seine. Day was approaching, when Lieutenant Thornton perceived that the lugger had dragged, and that at last she had brought up, two miles higher up than the town of Havre, nearly abreast of Harfleur. The launch, after landing the prisoners, had pulled back to the *Diamond*, and Sir Sidney Smith perceiving, as the daylight made, several vessels coming out of Havre to attack and re-take the lugger, gallantly put back to her assistance, resolved to defend her to the last; a most spirited determination, but an unfortunate one, as will be seen in our next chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

SIR SIDNEY SMITH, having pulled back to the *Vengeance*, found our hero busily engaged routing out all the shot that could be found; but, to their exceeding surprise and vexation, not more than three or four pounds could be discovered.

"This is very unfortunate, Thornton," said Sir Sidney. "However, get under weigh, for, by Jove, I perceive a large lugger coming out, no doubt to attack us."

Our hero accordingly got the lugger under sail, though, as the wind blew, and with the strong flood tide making, there was very little prospect of reaching the *Diamond*, though they did not perceive it at the time, so very much engaged were they. Captain Baptiste Gaudet, the late skipper of the *Vengeance*, who was put ashore with his crew, seeing the way the wind and tide set, manned two large boats, with their crews well armed,

and pulled out for the lugger, to re-capture her. In the meantime, several shots from the shore reached the vessel. All, on board, however, were prepared for a desperate resistance. As the enemy came up, a continued discharge of musketry took place from both vessels, but the lugger discharged her four-pounders rammed full of grape into the Vengeance, wounding several of the men, and a young midshipman named Beecroft. This gallant young lad refused to leave the deck, merely tying a handkerchief over the wound.

"I fear, Thornton," said Sir Sidney, stooping to pick up his hat, which a musket ball had knocked off, "I fear we shall have to give in, or needlessly sacrifice our brave fellows; there are four dead already, and I see those boats coming up are full of men."

"I wish most devoutly, Sir Sidney," said William Thornton, anxiously gazing seaward, "that you had not turned back, the consequence would then have been as nothing. Your capture would be a terrible blow to the service."

There was no time for words, for a furious fire commenced with musketry from the boats from the crew of the Vengeance, who came alongside, scrambled up over the quarters with loud cries and shouts.

"There!" exclaimed Baptiste Gaudet, the skipper, pointing to William Thornton, who with Saunders alone was making a desperate attempt to drive back a boat's crew boarding over the starboard quarter, whilst Sir Sidney was repelling the troops in the boats, "Sacre tonnerre! that's the man who shot my brother-in-law. Don't kill him; drag him down, and that fellow with him."

But our hero and Saunders were not so easily dragged down; a furious fight ensued, and several of the crew of the Vengeance were struck to the deck. Just as Sir Sidney surrendered, they were overpowered and at last disarmed, dragged down the companion stairs by the legs, and kicked brutally; they were then strongly bound hand and foot to ring bolts on the cabin-floor, and then Captain Gaudet left them, swearing savagely he would make them remember him before he had done with them.

Whilst this was occurring, Sir Sidney Smith and the midshipman, Westly Wright, were forcibly thrust into the boats alongside with the rest of the men. The former repeatedly asked after William Thornton, but the men only insulted him; they were at once carried ashore and landed at Havre. Sir Sidney and Wright were marched to Rouen, and thence to Paris. This occurrence, however, is history, and has nothing to do with our future narrative; we return to our hero and his faithful follower, Bill Saunders.

Though severely bruised, and with one or two sharp cutlass

wounds, William Thornton and Bill Saunders felt little the worse, experiencing more indignation at the treatment they had received than pain from their injuries.

The cabin, on the floor of which our hero and his fellow-captive were stretched, was large and commodious, but perfectly dark, with the exception of a faint light through some bulls' eyes, a tarpaulin having been thrown over the sky-light.

"Do these villains mean to murder us, sir?" asked Bill Saunders, after a fierce and vain effort to free himself. "I cannot understand why they should treat your honour in this way."

"I cannot exactly understand it myself, Bill," replied William Thornton. "I soon recognised the skipper of this infernal lugger, that has brought such misfortune upon us and our Commander, as the instigator of this attack upon us, for I heard him say, 'Pull them down, don't kill them;' so to cut our throats is not their intention, or they would have done so at once."

"I'm blessed, your honour, if I did not also see the same black-looking rascal I stuck my pike into once before; I thought I had settled his hash then, and I'm blowed if he aint turned up again. I expect if we don't get the use of our fins they will cut our windpipes, after they gives us a dose of torture; not that what we are enjoying now is pleasant by any means."

"No," returned our hero, "it's not pleasant to be trussed up like barn-door fowls. I wonder what they have done with our Commander and the rest of our comrades."

"Look, your honour; I'm blowed, now my eyes are getting accustomed to this here light, if I don't see a big clasp knife hanging by a cord to a key in the locker, behind your honour, close to your feet; only try, sir, if you can kick it out."

Lieutenant Thornton worked himself round, and by a powerful effort got on his knees, and seeing the knife, after repeated and tiresome efforts, he jerked it out of the lock, and then lying down contrived to get hold of it. As he did so they heard the companion pushed back, and some persons descended the stairs. Our hero had only time to say:

"Lie still, and be quiet, whatever they say or do."

"Blow me," muttered Bill to himself, "it's easy to do that, seeing I don't understand a word of their cursed lingo, and haven't the power even to rub my nose; curse them!"

The cabin door was opened, and two men entered, one holding a lantern. Lieutenant Thornton at once recognised the skipper of the Vengeance, and the mate of the Bon-Citoyen, whom our hero recollected having put on board the Babet, who was afterwards put ashore at Belleisle by Lieutenant O'Loughlin, and finally, after the departure of the corvette, got on board the Vengeance, with several more of the schooner's men.

"So," exclaimed Baptiste Gaudet, with a savage oath, throwing the faint light of the lantern on the young Lieutenant's features.

"So there you are—curse you! it was you that shot my brother-in-law, and took his schooner. *Sacre diable!* I have a mind now to slice your throat, only I'll work with a bitter revenge out of you."

"You are a cowardly, ungrateful ruffian," said Lieutenant Thornton, calmly. "I gave you the quarter you vowed to refuse us, and besides treated you well, and even restored you to liberty, and this is the return you make."

"It's a cursed deal too good for you; and this beast too," added the mate of the Citizen, giving Bill Saunders a savage kick, "run his pike into me;" and again he brutally kicked Saunders, whose blood was fever heat with rage.

"Ah! let them bide," said Gaudet, "till we come back, and that cursed frigate has put to sea. Mind if I don't cut your hides into strips; I swore to do so, if we had the luck to catch you: I'll do it, and pitch your carcasses into the sea;" and with fearful oaths, each administering a kick to their helpless captives, they left the cabin, closing the companion.

Bill Saunders foamed at the mouth, till he was in danger of suffocation. He bore the kicks administered to himself tolerably; but when he saw the skipper do the same to his Lieutenant, the honest fellow thought his heart would burst.

"Your honour," said Bill, half choking, "I should like to have died, if it would have saved you. The villain; I only wish to live to have my hands round that ruffian's throat."

"Well, Bill, our turn may come yet. I have the knife, and presently we will see what we can do with it; the difficulty is, our hands being bound behind us, to open it."

"Try, sir!" exclaimed Bill; "for the love of heaven do hold it to my mouth. I'll open it with my teeth!"

"I am so fast to this ringbolt that I cannot turn."

After many efforts, however, Bill succeeded in opening the clasp knife.

"Ah! blow me, if we aint a match for them now," exultingly exclaimed Bill, who, clasping the knife between his bound hands, contrived to saw his cords through, with only one or two slight cuts. In five minutes more, by great exertion, they were both totally freed from their bonds, Bill declaring he could then face a dozen Frenchmen, whilst his master breathed a prayer of thank-giving. They did not fear death, but to be probably stripped, and cruelly flogged by a set of piratical ruffians, was infinitely worse than death.

"Now, keep quiet a few minutes," said our hero, as Bill stretched his huge frame, to recover his powers, as he declared

that he might annihilate every soul remaining on board the lugger. They listened for several moments, but did not hear a single foot pacing the deck above.

"Most of them have gone ashore," whispered the Lieutenant.

"Let us look in the lockers, your honour; we may find cutlasses, or pistols."

Opening the lockers with the key they picked up from the floor—to their intense joy, they found the large locker full of cutlasses. Bill almost shrieked for joy as he grasped a brace of them.

"Now, your honour, let us burst up the companion, and slice their gizzards."

Cautiously ascending it, as they reached the top, they heard a step pacing the deck, and then our hero heard a voice saying—

"Do you see the boats, François?"

"No," returned a voice in the forepart of the vessel.

"Sacre diable! how long they are, and here's a fine breeze and a strong down tide."

"Now, Bill, put your shoulder to the companion, and up with it, there are only a few on board; the rest, I suppose, are ashore with the boats."

"More's the pity," growled Bill, as putting his strength to the slide, he sent it into shivers with a loud crash. A volley of oaths from four, or more men, located in various parts of the lugger, saluted the liberated captives as they sprang upon the deck.

"Fire the bow-gun, Pierre! fire the gun!" shouted the man near the companion, drawing his cutlass, and, joined by four others with boarding pikes, making a desperate rush at our hero and Bill. But the Frenchmen had to do with two remarkably powerful, active men, both very expert in the use of the cutlass; the man ran, however, with a lighted match, and fired the bow-gun; its loud report echoing from the shore. Our hero's superior skill soon told upon his adversaries, two of whom fell dead upon the deck; Bill, dashing at three others, they fled; one in his terror threw himself overboard, whilst the remaining two, leaping down the fore-hatch into the fore-cabin, left the victors in complete possession of the Vengeance.

"Cut the cable, Bill; cut the cable!" shouted our hero, running to the tiller; "hack it with your cutlass."

Bill stumbled upon an axe, and with a single blow severed the cable, when instantaneously the lugger, in the strong tide and wind, swung round. By great good fortune, and the carelessness of those on shore, drinking and carousing, the only craft that could have pursued them with a chance of success had just taken the ground, and was hard and fast, when the

men, alarmed by the sound of the bow-gun, rushed down to their boats. It was a dark night, with a strong land wind, and a fast ebb tide. Lieutenant Thornton could hear the splash of oars in boats passing; so lashing the heavy tiller amidship, he hastened forward to see if he and Bill could run up the immense fore-lug. There was a Spanish windlass attached to the mast; so taking a turn of the haulyards, they put their whole strength to it, and ran it up, perspiring with the effort. Making fast the sheet-blocks, our hero ran aft, just as the foremost boat, finding they began to lose ground, the moment the lug filled, fired their muskets into the lugger, but with no further result than knocking a few splinters out of the bulwarks.

"I wish I could give you a dose of grape, you beggars!" exclaimed Bill, shaking his clenched hand at the boats, now dropping astern fast.

The reports of the guns evidently aroused the attention of the forts on the north shore, for our successful adventurers beheld lights moving along the front of the battery; but as it was impossible for those on the battery to know what was the cause of the firing, and the darkness of the night rendering the lugger almost imperceptible, she ran past unsuspected. Bill Saunders, with our hero's help, set the mizen, and under these two sails the Vengeance ran out rapidly into the outer road. They did not expect to see the Diamond at anchor after the events of the day, but fully expected, as they ran off the land and daylight came, to see her either lying to or standing off and on.

"What shall I do with the two vagabonds forward?" questioned Bill, coming aft to take the tiller; "one is dead, and the other has an ugly clip over the left eye. Your honour hits hard; I seed him catch it as he drove his boarding pike at your breast. There are two others below; I can work these lubbers on deck and make them lend a hand."

"Let us run three or four miles out, Bill; we can then lie to for daylight. You can, however, put the dead man overboard, and we will see what we can do for the one that is wounded. Just go and see if you can find a lantern. I should be glad if you could also lay your hand upon something stronger than water. I have lost some blood and feel a little fagged; nothing to signify though."

"We want to splice the main brace, your honour, after our scrimmage, and mayhap I may find a keg of brandy;" and Bill dived down below, and after a good search found plenty of wine and some brandy in the steward's lockers, besides three or four days' provisions.

A little brandy and biscuit refreshed both our hero and his follower. The night continued dark and the breeze very fresh,

shifting as they cleared the outward harbour, blowing partly along the coast. The Vengeance was one of the fastest and handsomest privateer luggers out of a French port. She was above one hundred and sixty tons, and remarkably well provided with every requisite.

Bill taking the tiller, our hero proceeded with a lighted lantern to explore the cabin. He discovered the late skipper's stock of garments, and a locker full of pistols; but no store anywhere in the cabin of powder and ball. Returning upon deck, he found Bill consoling himself with a large lump of salt beef and a bottle of wine.

"She's a very fine craft, sir," said Saunders, "and slips through the water under her fore-lug, though only half hoisted, like a witch. It was nearly up with us, sir, only for the knife."

"In truth it was, Bill! Such events should teach us never to despair, and that there is a Providence always watching over us. Now if we cannot make out the Diamond we must make a run across the Channel. Rouse up those two fellows in the fore cuddy to help us to make sail, hunger will freshen them up if they should turn sulky."

"What's that smoke?" continued our hero, rather startled at seeing a wreath of smoke issuing from the fore cuddy; "run forward, Bill, and see what those fellows are about, they cannot have been so mad as to fire the craft!"

Saunders rushed forward, and as he did so the two Frenchmen staggered up on deck, and seeing Bill alone threw their arms round his neck, strove to drag him down, and to stick him with their open knives; smoke and flame at the same time bursting up through the hatch.

Bill shook off his two opponents as a mastiff would a lap-dog, and with a terrible blow with his clenched fist, sent one sprawling against the windlass. Lieutenant Thornton had rushed to his assistance, but Bill wanted no help, for his other assailant fled to the bows with savage oaths, exulting that they had fired the vessel.

"Did you think," he fiercely exclaimed, as our hero came up, "that you were going to have the Vengeance for a prize? We are all sworn to sink or fire her."

"Then blow me," said Bill Saunders, when the Lieutenant told him what the man had said, "if you shall either sink or be burned in her," and seizing the Frenchman in his terrible grasp before our hero could prevent him, he hurled him over the bows.

Despite their imminent danger, the Lieutenant ran aft and threw the drowning wretch a rope; he made an effort to grasp it, failed, and sank with a despairing cry. Thus the wretch

who did not fear to meet death by fire, shrieked in despair in meeting his doom by water.

"Haul aft the sheet, Bill!" shouted our hero; "it's quite in vain to think of extinguishing this fire; we must run her ashore round yonder headland. Providentially the wind permits us to make the land without a tack.

As the deck caught, the flames threw a vivid glare over the waters, as the lugger dashed on for the land, as if urged by her prospect of certain destruction. It was an awful moment! The flames spread to the rigging of the lugger, and then the sail, and the sheets being consumed, the fiery mass dashed wildly about, as the flames roared, the strong breeze increasing their force.

"Come down below, Bill, she will strike in a few moments, and let us put on the Frenchmen's garments; who knows but we may do something for freedom yet."

"Curse the villains!" cried Bill; "they have burned the craft, and now I am to be turned into a frog-eating, soup-swilling Frenchman."

In a few minutes they were completely rigged in two French seamen's garments, and the furious flames hurried them on deck just as the lugger struck upon a reef, gave two or three heavy lurches, heeled over, and sunk in deep water under a lofty cliff, extinguishing the flames of the hull, and leaving the remnants of the burning sail fluttering in the wind. That part of the deck unconsumed was level with the water, but the swell over the bank washed over it. Lieutenant Thornton and Saunders, half blinded by the smoke and flying sparks from the burning sail, threw themselves over the side, a few strokes brought them ashore under the cliff. Landing upon some sharp and slippery rocks, and shaking themselves as they landed and clambered over the rocks, our hero said to his companion—

"We must get as far from this spot as we can, and dry ourselves in the morning sun, before we reconnoitre inland."

"Ah! your honour, it was a bad job. I ought to have pitched those two lubbers overboard at first;" and growling and lamenting, Bill followed his officer along the base of the cliff, where we must leave them, and retrace our narrative many years in our next chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

A FEW pages respecting the family of the De Bracys will here be necessary for the clear understanding of our story.

Early in life Sir Oscar De Bracy and his sister, Anne, were left orphans. On attaining his twenty-first year Sir Oscar, then a lieutenant in the navy, came into possession of the family property. His sister had gone abroad with her aunt, a Mrs. Webb, the widow of a Colonel Webb, who dying, had left his wife a very handsome fortune. Being in delicate health, Mrs. Webb was advised to try a warm climate; so, taking her niece, at that time only seventeen, they proceeded to the Continent, and settled for some time in Naples.

The Court of Naples, at this period, was accounted one of the most corrupt in Europe; but Mrs. Webb, being of a retiring disposition, lived in comparative seclusion, in a villa, situated on the River Chiaga, then the favourite drive of the pleasure-seeking Neapolitans.

Anne De Bracy was charmed with the lovely scenery and the delicious climate. At night she would sit for hours at her window, enjoying the air, so refreshing after the heat of the day; as the moon stood high in the heavens, silvering with its soft light the columns of smoke from Vesuvius, as they rose upwards in curling wreaths towards heaven; then the countless fishing skiffs, with their lights flashing in the waters from their sterns, to attract the lobsters and large fish, which rise at once to the light, and are caught. To Anne De Bracy, the tall, dark figures on which the bright flames glanced, amid the calm stillness of the moon-lit scene, appeared almost demon-like. Almost close beside the handsome villas and mansions along the river, are to be seen the strange dwellings of the poor fishermen, which are scooped out like caves from the hard rock; many of them without any kind of window, receiving the light and air needed from the open door.

Anne De Bracy, with her aunt, who rarely stirred abroad till evening, used often to walk along the front of these primitive dwellings, lighted within by the oil lamp, revealing to view the careless and life-loving family within; the girls gaily singing and chatting at times, the men mending nets, and making bark-woven baskets.

One evening, a rather sultry one, Mrs. Webb and her niece were walking along the beach, when the former complained of a sudden faintness, and before they could even reach one of the cottages, or rather caves, she fainted in the frightened girl's arms. Miss De Bracy uttered a cry of alarm; and as she did so, a young man, in a fisherman's costume, rushed

from behind a jutting rock, and ran forward in time to catch Mrs. Webb in his arms.

"She has only fainted, lady," said the stranger, as he bore the insensible Mrs. Webb towards the rock, from which ran a rill of pure water, with which he gently bathed her face. "Do not be frightened, she will soon revive."

Now that she was no longer alone, Miss De Bracy was less alarmed; but the tones of the fisherman's voice, his manner and appearance, surprised her, as by the strong light of a full moon she gazed at him.

He was a tall, handsome man, much fairer than the generality of the Neapolitans; his attire the same picturesque costume as that of the fishermen, but better, and of finer materials; whilst he spoke pure Italian, but not the Neapolitan dialect.

"This is no fisherman," thought the young girl, as she thanked the stranger, who was holding the pungent essence contained in a bottle to her aunt's nostrils; who in a very short time was able to continue the walk.

Looking up at the motionless figure of the fisherman, Mrs. Webb politely thanked him, and taking a few silver coins from her purse, she begged him to accept them. Her niece's eyes were fixed upon the stranger; and she saw his dark cheek flush, and his still darker eyes sparkle with a strange expression; but he at once said, gently putting back Mrs. Webb's hand—

"No, lady; not for a service of this kind; your thanks are ample reward."

And with a look of unmistakable admiration at Anne De Bracy, which called the hot blood to her cheek, he made a graceful salute, and retired amongst the rocks.

"How very odd, Anne," said Mrs. Webb; "what an uncommonly handsome, graceful kind of person for a fisherman. I fear I frightened you, dear."

"I was not so much frightened, aunt," answered the niece, thoughtfully; "but as we were some little distance from help, I did not exactly know what to do, till this stranger ran up and carried you here, and sprinkled your face with water."

"He is certainly a very handsome fisherman," observed Mrs. Webb; "we have seen, I think, all our neighbours here, and I certainly never remarked him."

"I do not think he is a fisherman," replied Miss De Bracy, with a smile, as they slowly proceeded home.

"Then what can he be, Anne?" questioned the aunt; "this is no masquerading time."

That question Anne De Bracy cared not to answer; she could conjecture, but that was all.

Our space will not permit us to dwell upon all the events of Anne De Bracy's life; we must only touch on its important

parts briefly, till we bring her again before our readers as the unfortunate Duchess de Coulancourt.

The handsome fisherman was Mr. Granby Arden, the elder brother of Sir Godfrey Etherton. Of a strange and eccentric character, but possessed of a highly cultivated mind, he, by his peculiar mode of thinking and reading, imbibed a decided aversion to all monarchical governments. His great-great-grandfather had been a staunch supporter of Oliver Cromwell, and had lost his life in opposing the return of Charles II. His estates were mostly all forfeited to the Crown, so that the two brothers inherited but moderate fortunes. Mr. Granby Arden, however, succeeded to his mother's property, an income of some twelve or fourteen hundred a year, whilst Godfrey Arden entered the navy.

Granby Arden, when two-and-twenty, passed over into France; where his prejudice against kings and rulers, even at that period, had abundant supporters. With a perfect knowledge of the French, Italian, and German languages, his handsome person and persuasive eloquence, aided by a voice remarkable for its rich and powerful tones, soon caused him to be remarked in the political circles of the capital of France. Louis XVI. had just commenced his career of troubles—the monarchy of France was at this time a pure despotism—but the resources of the realm and the energies of the people were wasted and paralysed.

Granby Arden became the associate of Diderot and D'Alembert; he read with avidity the pungent writings of Voltaire, upsetting all preconceived notions by satire and sarcasm; and Rousseau, who, by his appeals to the passions, worked to frenzy by his high wrought pictures those minds stirred by doubt.

Though a hater of royalty and despotism, in every shape and form, Granby Arden was of a kind and generous nature; he, however, so involved himself in political intrigues, that, in the end, he was forced to fly from Paris—for the time was not yet come for the overthrow of all the ancient usages of the kingdom.

Granby Arden went to Italy. The corrupt court of Naples and the licentiousness of the Queen and her supposed lover and minister, Acton, induced him whilst there to join in a secret intrigue to upset the Government. To carry out his own and the projects of others, he disguised himself as a fisherman, and dwelt with one of their body for a time in their caves on the Riviere di Chiaia, and there love, for the time, overturned all his projects.

He saw, and became desperately enamoured of, Miss Anne de Bracy.

Granby Arden's name in England was notorious for his political opinions; and he well knew, when he made himself known to Miss de Bracy, and gained her love, that her brother, Sir Oscar de Bracy, a distinguished officer in the navy, would never give his consent to their marriage.

We need not detail with minuteness a very common occurrence; his eloquence overpowered all the fair girl's arguments; she was beloved and loved, and, as women will do, confided in him she loved, and they fled from Naples together, without leaving a trace behind them, nor could Mrs. Webb give any explanation of her niece's mysterious disappearance. At Sienna, Anne de Bracy became Mrs. Arden, and, near Leghorn, they took a very pretty cottage, and for a time love banished politics from Mr. Arden's mind.

Whilst residing in that vicinity, Mr. Arden became acquainted with Lord Hood, then only a post-captain, whose ship was off Leghorn; and who one night would have fallen a victim to assassination, being taken for another officer, had not Mr. Arden, who chanced to be returning home, come to his assistance, and struck down one of the assassins—the other fled. An intimacy ensued; and before Captain Hood sailed, Mr. Arden stated to him that he was a married man, and introduced him to his beautiful wife, but did not mention her maiden name. Shortly after Captain Hood's departure, a son was born to Mr. Arden, and called Julian; and, in due course, a daughter, who was named Mabel; after which, they travelled into Switzerland, but always under a feigned name; and, finally, when Julian Arden had reached his sixth year, and little Mabel her third, letters were received from Paris which induced Mr. Arden to return to that city, notwithstanding his wife's tears and entreaties, leaving his wife and children in a cottage he rented near Lyons, and before three months had expired fell in a duel with an officer of the guards.

We need scarcely say the grief and agony of the bereaved wife was terrible; but, before she could rouse herself from her distraction, and fly into other lands with her children, the revolution which had broken out presented a barrier to flight. The cottage Mrs. Arden inhabited was upon the estate of the Duke de Coulancourt, a nobleman of considerable wealth, high birth, and a confirmed friend of the unfortunate king; he was at this time in his forty-eighth year, and unmarried. The persecution of Collet D'Herbois, who headed a violent party in Lyons, drove Mrs. Arden to seek the protection of her landlord, the duke. The aristocracy were not yet overthrown, though they still possessed only a shadow of power. The duke imprisoned D'Herbois, and, struck by the beauty and grace of the fair widow, for the first time felt the influence of female beauty,

and after a lapse of eighteen months, Mrs. Arden became Duchess de Coulancourt. Three years after her first husband's death she accompanied the duke to an estate in Normandy, from whence his title was derived.

The unfortunate king was then in the last stage of his miserable greatness. The Duke de Coulancourt, who adored his wife, and who was the kindest of fathers to her children, executed a deed constituting her his sole heiress. He then, as affairs were getting in a terrible state in the capital, implored her to take refuge in his château near Lyons, where the Royalists existed in force, promising he would follow after one more effort to serve his royal master; and should he fail, they would fly to Italy or to England. Alas! like many another noble and devoted heart, his head was placed beneath the axe of the guillotine—his last thoughts being his God and his beloved wife. We are already aware of the persecutions the duchess a second time endured from Collet D'Herbois, raised into power by the revolution, and destined to become one of its ministers.

There was, however, another enemy—Monsieur de Montaut—the duchess had to fear, though she knew it not. This enemy, however, had no wish to bring her head beneath the guillotine; for, the duke having executed a deed bequeathing his estates and property to his wife, this Monsieur de Montaut would, as the duke's cousin, upon her death, succeed to the property. As to the title, he cared not about it; he was a rank revolutionist, and titles were extinct; but he knew that if the duchess were beheaded by order of the Government, the estates would go to the nation. His object, therefore, was to secure the person of the duchess, and, if he could not force her to marry him, he would, at all events, frighten her into executing a deed in his favour. Afterwards, as he possessed considerable power, he intended to connive at her escape to England, his party being at that time in the ascendancy.

By means of spies, Montaut ascertained that Jean Plessis had contrived to rescue the duchess, a rescue he could not achieve. He traced her to Toulon, but was not able to discover for some days where she was concealed; but, having done so, he laid his plans for securing her person, and her daughter's also. Having succeeded, as regarded the former, in the manner already related, the duchess was carried, quite unconscious who was her abductor, to his château near Lyons, on the banks of the Rhone.

Monsieur de Montaut was a perfect stranger to the Duchess de Coulancourt. She thought herself in the power of Collet d'Herbois, and, in the midst of her cruel grief at being torn from her daughter, she yet congratulated herself that she had

saved her child, and the casket of valuable jewels, together with many most important papers.

The château of Monsieur Gamel Maria de Montaut was some fourteen leagues from Lyons, seated on a slight eminence above the Rhone, and surrounded by dense woods.

Jean Plessis, with incredible energy and perseverance, had contrived to track the duchess to her place of confinement. Satisfied that her person and life were safe, though in the power of a revolutionary chief, he returned to Toulon, with the intention of disposing of two or three houses, and then devote himself to the liberation of madame. The English fleet was still before Toulon, and, ascertaining that Mabel was on board the *Robust* with Madame Volney, he wrote the letter our hero received, and paid two fishermen to deliver it on board the *Babet*. Then, having disposed of his houses to a notary, and received the purchase-money, he contrived, by disguising himself, and becoming for the time a furious partisan of the Republic, to set about his schemes for the delivery of the duchess from the power of Monsieur de Montaut, who was then one of the Republican commissioners in Lyons.

This would not have been difficult in the fearfully disorganised state of France; but, unfortunately, Jean Plessis became suspected, was suddenly arrested and thrown into prison, and was condemned to death; but at that critical moment Robespierre and the Reign of Terror ceased to exist, and Montaut himself was dragged, with his colleagues, to the guillotine, and, amidst the shouts and rejoicings of the people, beheaded.

Madame de Coulancourt was conveyed to Paris, and remained some time confined in the Abbey. Finally, as things settled into tranquillity under the Directory, she was brought to trial. Nothing whatever appearing to criminate her, she was released, and left in full possession of her estates, but strictly prohibited, under pain of forfeiture of her property and imprisonment, either to leave the country, or in any way, by letter or message, to communicate with England.

Madame de Coulancourt, grateful to Providence for her preservation from so many perils, selected a handsome mansion in Paris for residence, where she looked forward with hope to peace to restore her daughter to her; her son she firmly believed to have been beheaded. Some months after Jean Plessis obtained his liberty, and soon learned by diligent inquiries the fate of Madame de Coulancourt, and at once set out for Paris, thus relieving Madame de Coulancourt's mind from great anxiety on his and his family's account, for she feared he had perished in attempting her deliverance.

CHAPTER XVI.

FIVE years have passed since Mabel Arden was placed under the care of Mrs. Sampson; and she was now seventeen years of age. For the last six months she had quitted school, and remained under the care and protection of Madame Volney, who, with her daughter Agatha, resided in a pretty villa in the immediate vicinity of Southampton. Madame Volney's income was five hundred a-year, having placed the large sum of money she had had bequeathed to her in the hands of Mr. Stanmore, who had invested it for her very advantageously.

The thousand pounds so generously left by Lieutenant O'Loughlin and our hero for Mabel's benefit Mr. Stanmore also placed out at interest; and what the interest lacked in amount to discharge the expense of her schooling, the solicitor paid himself, so that the little capital remained untouched, Mr. Stanmore feeling satisfied that Mabel would in the end be able to establish her rights, and recover interest and principal out of the Etherton estates; but as to forcing Sir Godfrey to acknowledge his niece without certain proofs of her birth, &c., was out of the question.

About two years after the placing of Mabel at school, Sir Godfrey Etherton became somewhat embarrassed, through the imprudence of his son-in-law, Lord Coldburgh and Philip Etherton, who were fast friends, the former having induced his brother-in-law to join him in a security for fourteen thousand pounds—racing debts—which his lordship declared were to be paid for out of the proceeds of an estate in Dorsetshire, to be sold immediately. Unfortunately his lordship's creditors, thinking he lived much too fast, brought matters to a close, and laid hands on all the property, politely requesting Mr. Philip Etherton to take up the bond for fourteen thousand pounds.

This Mr. Etherton could not do. Lord and Lady Coldburgh, in the end, were compelled to retire to a mansion his lordship possessed in Yorkshire and live (starve they styled it), on four hundred a year, the creditors having allowed them that sum from the property till the whole of the debts were paid off, which would not be for a term of fourteen years. Sir Godfrey Etherton had to pay a sum of nine thousand pounds, it being proved that part of the fourteen thousand pounds included gambling debts of his son. The baronet felt this severely, being both a penurious and heartless man, for he was quite satisfied in his mind that Mabel was his niece; but he was in great hopes that having lost the contents of the casket, and her mother being, as he believed, guillotined, he should never hear more of her claims.

The baronet insisted on his son giving up his racing asso-

ciates and extravagant mode of life, fixing upon some wealthy heiress, and winding up his future by marriage. But Mr. Philip Etherton's career was destined to be a very short one; the year after, whilst shooting with a friend, in loading his double-barrelled gun, the loaded barrel, by some unaccountable accident, went off, and the contents lodged in the brain of the unfortunate young man, killing him on the spot. This terrible catastrophe plunged the Etherton family into deep despondency. Sir Godfrey appeared to feel it as a judgment upon him for his cruelty and injustice to his orphan niece, and yet he strove in his own mind to convince himself that he acted from principle; "for why," he argued, "should I receive a young girl as my niece simply upon a woman's word, who may be, and no doubt is, an impostor?"

The baronet, immediately after the death of his eldest son, removed Howard Etherton from the navy, and he returned home. Sir Godfrey's troubles and anxiety of mind respecting his brother's wife and child brought on a heart disease, and in less than five years from Mabel's residence in England he was gathered to his fathers, and Howard Etherton succeeded to the title and estates.

During those five years so eventful to the Etherton family, Mabel Arden was growing up into an exquisitely lovely and accomplished girl. The first two years she constantly looked forward to either hearing from or seeing her never-forgotten mother; but as time passed on, and no tidings could be gained from France, convulsed as it was to its centre, and a fierce war raging between the two countries, she began to despair. As she advanced towards womanhood her feelings for her young protector she felt, though she scarcely knew how, were undergoing a great change; the childish love was maturing itself in her young and most affectionate heart. The mere mention of his name caused the rich blood to rush to her cheek, and a deep anxiety stole over her when news arrived of the English fleet, or engagements between any of the French and English ships. Four years had elapsed since she had seen William Thornton, as she still called him, though convinced his real name was Oscar de Bracy, and that they were cousins.

To Mr. Stanmore's excessive vexation, news reached England of Sir Oscar de Bracy's death taking place at the Cape of Good Hope. The solicitor, fearing that such a catastrophe might occur, had taken the precaution to send out letters by a Government vessel, detailing all the circumstances of our hero's story as related to him by Lieutenant O'Loughlin, by William Thornton, and Lord Hood's coxswain; as well as Madame Volney's account of the finding of the picture of himself round the neck of the child. In fact, he omitted no circumstance

likely to convince the most sceptical of the identity of William Thornton's being Sir Oscar de Bracy's son. Whether the baronet received these letters and documents before his death Mr. Stanmore remained ignorant, and would remain so, till the frigate that was under Sir Oscar's orders should return to England. The lawyer was also aware that the baronet, as governor of —, must have accumulated a considerable sum, his large salary and emoluments, together with a vast amount of prize money, would constitute a fortune in themselves. The Duchess de Coulaucourt, therefore, in default of heirs direct, would no doubt be entitled to his property if he died without a will.

Mabel Arden felt acutely, particularly on our hero's account, this untoward event of Sir Oscar de Bracy's death. She knew he would deeply deplore it, for his most ardent desire was to be acknowledged by his father. The last letters Mabel and Agatha Volney had received from the two friends were just previous to the Diamond frigate's visit to Brest harbour. William Thornton wrote with all the sincerity and truth of an affectionate brother; the fondest sister could find no fault with the tone and tenor of his long and affectionate letter. But there was nothing of love in it: how could there be? She was scarcely more than thirteen when they parted, and yet Mabel was in her heart disappointed; and her cheeks glowed as she detected her feelings.

Agatha Volney, a light-hearted, affectionate, generous girl, loved her intended husband, Lieutenant O'Loughlin, with true affection, and looked forward with cheerfulness and hope to his being made a commander—the time fixed upon for their union.

William Thornton, in his letter, observing that delays were dangerous, playfully hinted that O'Loughlin's whiskers were turning into a greyish tint, and that if Agatha waited ten years longer, they would be of a uniform colour, and the commandership still in the clouds.

Not long after the receipt of these letters, the inmates of the villa were startled, and most agreeably surprised, by the entrance of O'Loughlin himself. Agatha and Mabel were alone in the drawing-room when he entered; before a word could be said he threw his arm round the blushing, but delighted Agatha, and kissed her with fond affection, saying—

"I am entitled to this; I am, by Jove! I have been made commander."

Then looking around, he perceived the tall and graceful form of Mabel Arden; he gazed at her for a moment bewildered; her extreme loveliness, and sweet expressive features, amazed him.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed; "and yet the eyes are those of Miss Arden."

"Yes," said Mabel, with her sweet, captivating smile, and extending her hand to the delighted sailor; "I am Mabel. You cannot have forgotten the little deserted girl you so generously and nobly protected."

"Forgot!" exclaimed the sailor, kissing the hand held out to him; "that would be impossible. St. Patrick, if William were here, he would no longer say you were—hem—hem——"

Commander O'Loughlin coughed; he was on the point of saying his friend Thornton thought the beautiful girl before him was plain.

Mabel laughed; and shaking her head, she said playfully—

"Oh, I know that dear William thinks his little sister is plain. What then? Beauty is not the lot of all."

"Beauty!" exclaimed O'Loughlin; "by the immortal gods——"

"Take care," exclaimed Agatha Volney, shaking her finger at her lover, "how you call upon the immortal gods in speaking of the beauty of any other fair one, except your liege lady's; so sit down, quietly and contentedly, and tell us about yourself and friend, and relate all your wonderful adventures."

The delighted O'Loughlin sat down beside his fair betrothed, with Mabel on the other side, and commenced a recital of the several events that had occurred since their separation.

Before he had concluded Madame Volney and Mr. Stanmore were announced.

Mr. Stanmore informed his friends of the arrival of the frigate from the Cape, saying—

"I am happy to tell you she brings all the necessary documents, papers, &c., that I was so very anxious about. Most fortunately, or rather, providentially, my letters reached Sir Oscar before his death, and their contents imparted to his last hours soothing gratification and consolation, and his life was spared to complete and sign every necessary paper before proper witnesses. I will show you by-and-by his letter to me. It seems he was not aware that his sister was alive and had married a Mr. Granby Arden, and afterwards became Duchess of Coulauncourt, by a second marriage with a French duke, and that she had a daughter living. He made his will, drawn up by an eminent solicitor at the Cape, and finally disposed of his immense property, acknowledging with grateful thanks the goodness of Providence in permitting him to recognise and acknowledge William Thornton as his son and heir."

"I see no difficulty," continued Mr. Stanmore, "in proving Mr. Thornton's right to the name and title of Sir Oscar De

Bracy. The will shall be opened and read in a few days, and I wish you, Commander O'Loughlin, to be present."

We will here merely state the principal points in the will of the late Sir Oscar De Bracy : excepting a legacy of ten thousand pounds to his niece, Mabel Arden, five thousand to Mr. Patrick O'Loughlin, and a thousand each to his two solicitors, and ample donations to four attached domestics, the whole of his estates and remaining property were bequeathed to his son, known as William Thornton.

To his will was added a solemn declaration, before four witnesses, that he felt perfectly satisfied and convinced that the proofs of his son's preservation and his identity with William Thornton were most satisfactorily explained, and most clear as to dates, and that the picture found round the child's neck was one he left with Lady De Bracy a short period before his departure for India.

Captain O'Loughlin was greatly moved by this last mark of Sir Oscar's esteem and remembrance, whilst Mabel deeply deplored that one so kind-hearted and noble should have undergone such trials ; and that, just as his heart became relieved by the joyous intelligence received of his son's being still in existence, when life would have been a boon, the destroyer should have laid his hand on his victim.

"But we are not to murmur," she said ; "it is not upon earth we are to seek or expect our reward for trials ; we must look higher."

Captain O'Loughlin's marriage was postponed for twelve months. Neither he nor Agatha could think of their union taking place till the usual time for mourning for his generous benefactor had expired.

Three weeks passed calmly and pleasantly with Agatha Volney and her lover, who by this time had become an excellent French scholar ; though Agatha excelled him in her knowledge of the English language. Mabel was anxious to hear some news of our hero ; for generally the frigates cruising off the French ports returned at intervals to Plymouth and Falmouth, or vessels arrived with intelligence of their movements.

One morning Captain O'Loughlin, who was remaining at Southampton, and generally walked to the villa to breakfast, took a *Times* newspaper from his pocket.

"I have not had time to look at the naval intelligence this morning," said the Captain, "and I am really anxious——"

"And so am I," said Mabel, with a slight increase of colour ; "there has been no news of any kind for many days."

"Ha ! be the immortal powers, this is startling !"

"What is it ?" exclaimed Mabel, looking pale and frightened

at seeing the evident agitation of Captain O'Loughlin. "Pray do not hide anything from me, Mr. O'Loughlin. You are reading of some mishap to the Diamond?"

Captain O'Loughlin did look not only anxious, but exceedingly excited; but having once incautiously spoken out, he thought the best plan would be to state the facts. So, taking the paper, he read out a rather startling account of the capture of Sir Sidney Smith, Lieutenant Thornton, and Midshipman Westley Wright, in an attempt to cut out the celebrated privateer, *Vengeance*, from Havre, besides naming several men, either killed, wounded, or prisoners.

"The Diamond cruised for several days off the coast," continued the paper; "and the night after the unfortunate capture of Sir Sidney, those on board the frigate saw a vessel on fire in-shore; but before the Diamond could stand in sufficiently to make her out, the vessel must have been run ashore or consumed."

"Ha!" exclaimed Captain O'Loughlin, after a brief pause, "here is later intelligence, headed, 'Mysterious intelligence respecting the gallant attempt to cut out the *Vengeance* from the inner port of Havre.'"

"Two days," continued the paper, "after the capture of the gallant Sir Sidney, and his equally high spirited officer, Lieutenant Thornton, whose name has already been several times before the public for gallant enterprises and fortunate results, the Diamond frigate seized a small fishing lugger out of Havre, for the purpose of gaining some intelligence of Sir Sidney, his officers, and crew."

"The captain of the lugger was very willing to communicate all he knew; but he said he was mystified himself with respect to the cutting out of the *Vengeance*, though he was on the spot the whole time; he knew that one officer and a young midshipman were landed at Havre, and marched on with their men to Rouen; he did not know whether there was any other officer left on board the *Vengeance*, but certainly only the captain and midshipman were landed, for he saw them himself."

"Late in the evening," continued the Frenchman, "Captain Gaudet, the skipper of the *Vengeance*, his mate, and the crew, came ashore, excepting four or five of the men left to take care of the privateer till their return with powder and shot, there being very little on board. About two hours after their arrival, a gun was fired, which gave the alarm to Captain Gaudet and his mate, and they at once started in their boats for their craft, but the vessel was under weigh, and nearly out of port."

"They pursued, and fired into her with muskets, and the

fort was alarmed; but the lugger got clear away, and Captain Gaudet returned, cursing and swearing at his ill-luck, but giving no explanation that he heard.

"The very next day news arrived in Havre that the Vengeance had run ashore on Lyon Head Point in a sheet of flame, and was nearly consumed to the water's edge, but not a human being was to be seen by the fishermen, who, as soon as it was daylight, clambered down the cliffs, where her entire hull was visible when the tide receded.

"I sailed two hours after this intelligence arrived,' continued the captain of the fishing lugger; 'therefore am quite unable to explain the mystery of the transaction.' He also stated that Sir Sidney and his men had captured the Vengeance, but that wind and tide were against their taking her out; that they defended her in the most gallant manner, against overwhelming odds, for boats full of soldiers were sent out against them, besides an armed lugger."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mabel, her face very pale, and her voice trembling with emotion. "Can you understand, Captain O'Loughlin, what could have become of Lieutenant Thornton?"

"It is certainly very singular, and not very easily explained," said Captain O'Loughlin. "Still, it appears to me that somehow or another William Thornton must have taken the Vengeance to sea; who else could, for he was not taken ashore with Sir Sidney and the others, and there was no officer even wounded, except Midshipman Beecroft? How the Vengeance caught fire it is impossible for me to say, but if William was in her he has got ashore, and I should not be surprised but that with his knowledge of the French language he may manage to get safe out of the country. I wish to God I had been in the Diamond; I should have been tempted to run in to their rescue, even if I had lost the frigate in the attempt. But do not, I beg you, Mabel, take this so much to heart; I have every confidence in the gallantry and ingenuity of my friend; he will, if he is in France, work his way out of it. I wish I was with him. I am more vexed than I can tell you. I hoped when appointed to a ship to have had him for my first lieutenant; his interest with Lord Hood, and his own gallantry, would have made him a commander in six months."

"But with his fortune and rank," said Mabel, seriously, "why should he continue in the navy?"

"My dear Mabel," said Agatha Volney, "neither rank nor wealth would have the least effect on Sir Oscar de Bracy, for I think we ought to give him the name he is entitled to; rank or fortune would weigh nothing in the balance with honour and glory. The navy is his pride and delight."

"Be St. Patrick, you are right, Agatha!" said Captain O'Loughlin. "If you were to ask him which he would give up, wealth or profession, be the powers of war, he would say without hesitation, wealth, my beauty!"

"And pray, Mr., or rather Captain O'Loughlin," said Agatha, "if you were asked which you would give up, your profession or Miss Agatha Volney, I suppose it would be—'Be the powers of war, you, my beauty!'"

"Ah, you little deceiver!" said the Captain. "You know deuced well which way the vane would turn. Now, if my gallant young friend were once fairly caught in Cupid's meshes, to the deuce with the profession, when that wicked deceiver hoists his flag."

"And do you pretend to tell me, most redoubtable Commander," said Agatha, demurely, "that you were never in love before, and you in your twenty-seventh year?"

"Faith, I can't say that, fair Agatha," said the Captain, with a smile. "You know I was six years a middy, and a mid is perpetually in love—that is, when he gets ashore, and sees a petticoat fluttering in the wind. But I must be off to London to-night; try and console Mabel, she looks very unhappy (our heroine had retired, leaving the lovers together); upon my conscience I'm afraid her little heart is beating with something more than cousinly love for my handsome friend."

"And why should you say afraid?" asked Agatha. "Is there a lovelier girl in Great Britain than Mabel? When we spent a month at my sister's, she was the admiration of all the visitors, and at the Great Election Ball at Exeter she created universal admiration. She could if she pleased have had the choice of two coronets."

"I know that," said Captain O'Loughlin; "and I say with you that a more beautiful or more amiable maiden there is not to be found; but you see, William—that is, Sir Oscar—I shall hail him under his right name; but as I was saying, Sir Oscar is one of the handsomest men you probably ever saw; the women are all in love with him. Whenever we get ashore, and mix in society, he cuts us all out, and you see he's rather, I must confess, a leetle volatile—black, brown, and fair—and when I talk to him of Mabel he says, 'I dare say she is a very nice amiable girl; but it's preposterous to fancy myself in love with a little thing of thirteen. I love her with all my heart as a sister.'"

"I think, Master O'Loughlin," said Agatha, with a smile, and shaking her finger at the captain, who immediately got possession of it, "I think you have been a rather giddy pair in the Cupid line; but I tell you what, I should like Sir Oscar to see our dear Mabel without knowing who she was; I

would venture my hand, which, by-the-by, you are squeezing very hard—recollect my fingers are not ropes!”

“No, faith, nor those ruby lips marling spikes!”

“Come,” interrupted Agatha, jumping up with cheeks like a peony; “it is time you should go to London. I am afraid you will make but a very bad commander.”

“When I strike my colours to you, my sweet girl,” said the gallant Captain, gaily, “my commandership ceases; from that time I obey, not command.”

CHAPTER XVII.

LADY ETHERTON sincerely and deeply deplored the loss of her husband, for she really loved him; to her, his faults were in a measure hidden. But, alas, this was not the case with his daughters. A show of grief and an elaborate display in mourning was paraded before the world, but in their hearts they felt themselves emancipated from a restraint they styled tyranny. The girls fancied they would now be permitted to mix more with the world, and that after a time Etherton Hall would be filled with gay guests, and that their brother Howard would let them do as they liked. But a very short time proved to the five girls that they had woefully miscalculated. The new baronet was a man of an infinitely worse temper and disposition than his sire, and, for one so young, was penurious to a degree; and so haughty and arrogant in manners and words, that the domestics, in comparing notes, really found that they had been very unjust towards the deceased baronet, who, compared to his son, was really an amiable man.

The late baronet had kept up a handsome establishment, and, though particular and careful in his expenditure, he lived as became his rank and wealth. His successor diminished the establishment. Lady Etherton had a handsome jointure, but her daughters were, strange to say, left almost to the mercy of the brother. They each had a female attendant, and the two eldest had saddle-horses kept for their special use. Sir Howard having deliberately dismissed three of the female attendants, and sold the saddle-horses, and clipped various other sinecures, as he styled them, on the plea that the estate was greatly encumbered by the extravagance of his elder brother, told his sisters that if they expected fortunes, they would be very small ones, unless they economised at home. Lady Etherton remonstrated, and, after six months' trial of her son's mode of management, left Etherton Hall, and went with her favourite daughter

to Bath ; where, having an income of twelve hundred a-year' she lived remarkably well, and enjoyed society.

Sir Howard Etherton, having got rid of his mother and eldest sister, established his sister Jane as mistress of his establishment. This young lady, the plainest of the five, greatly resembled her brother in disposition, and, finding it was useless to complain, adopted the plan of coinciding with him in all his ideas and projects. The three younger girls had henceforward two tyrants instead of one.

Sir Howard Etherton was quite the reverse of his brother Philip, who loved hunters and race-horses, women and wine. The baronet cared for none of these agreeable modes of dissipating a fortune. He had no objection to females, certainly, but they must be encumbered with large fortunes, of which he was extremely willing to take charge ; but Miss Jane Etherton was in no hurry that her brother should find a wife until she had found a husband—a thing her youngest sister, Mary, who was a very pretty girl, told her, in a fit of passion at being thwarted in some wish, she would never get, as no man in his senses would marry a woman with such a nose.

Miss Jane's prominent organ was a serious feature in her face, and troubled her very much. It was marvellously long, fearfully thin, and the point awfully red, whilst her face was extremely pale. Mary had good reason to repent her remark, for it was never forgotten.

One morning Sir Howard Etherton looked very troubled and serious at breakfast, and, as soon as he was alone with his sister Jane, she remarked it.

"Yes," returned the Baronet, "what I heard yesterday is enough to make me look serious, and, in fact, to make us all look so."

"What can it be?" said Miss Jane, the tip of her nose betraying her anxiety by increasing in colour. It seemed as if this organ alone betrayed her emotions, for her cheeks remained always colourless.

"You remember, of course, going to London with your father to see a young lady who styled herself his niece. He was to hear the contents of some papers contained in a casket, which that officious, proud fellow—who now, forsooth, claims to be Sir Oscar de Bracy—had the care of ; a most confounded piece of imposture, depend upon it. But no matter about that now."

"Dear me!" interrupted Miss Jane, "I remember about this Mabel Arden, as she called herself. Yes, we went to London, but it all turned out a hoax—there were nothing but shavings in the casket. My poor father was most vilely treated by a horrid Irish seaman, who used violent language. If he had

been a gentleman my father intended horse-whipping him ; but, on inquiry, he learned that he was nobody, so of course he never took any further notice of him, or the pretended Mabel Arden."

"You are extremely eloquent this morning, Jane," said the Baronet, with a caustic sneer—for even his pet sister was subject to his fits of spleen ; "but you are quite out, I fear, in your deas respecting Mabel Arden. I will read you my solicitor's etter, which I received yesterday evening ;" and, putting his hand into his pocket-book, he pulled out a letter, which he read aloud :—

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I have just received a communication from Mr. Stanmore, solicitor, ——— Square, that surprises me. He states that it is his intention to assert the claims of Miss Mabel Arden to the name of Etherton, and to the portion, with interest, that she became entitled to on the death of Sir Granby Etherton. This is serious, for I find, on looking over your lamented father's papers, and reading some deeds and documents, that when your father succeeded to the title and estates, a sum of twenty thousand pounds ought to have been put aside at once as the future fortune of any daughters living at the time of his succession.

"I always understood that your father's elder brother died unmarried ; consequently this twenty thousand pounds became a settlement to be divided between your sisters, each receiving a portion, with interest according to age, out of the estates. But now it appears, from Mr. Stanmore's letter, that the late Mr. Granby Arden was married, and left two children, a son and daughter. The son it is supposed"—("He marks the word 'supposed,'" said Sir Howard, bitterly, looking up at his attentive sister)—"the son, it is supposed, perished at Lyons during the sacking of that city, but the daughter lives, and he declares Miss Mabel Arden to be that daughter. Now, if he can substantiate this to be the case, it will cost the Etherton estates a sum, with principal and simple interest, of nearly thirty-two thousand pounds. Pray let me see you as soon as possible, that I may know how to proceed and act.

"Yours faithfully,

"C. D. THORPE."

"Dear me, I am astonished !" said Miss Jane, as her brother folded the letter, with a very gloomy brow. "What do you intend doing ? Do you really believe this girl to be the daughter of our Uncle Arden ?"

"I do," returned the Baronet, sharply ; "but I cannot see

how she or any one else can prove her right and title to the name of Arden. Sir Oscar de Bracy, the late Governor of —, in India, has left her ten thousand pounds, perfectly satisfied that she was his niece. Curse that meddling coxswain's son, or protégé, which you please, that now claims the title and property of the Governor of —; but," added the baronet, exultingly, "he's a prisoner in France, or at the bottom of the ocean perhaps, for nothing certain is known of him. He it was that saved this girl's life; at all events, he brought her and the casket out of Toulon; whereas, if he had not interfered, she would very likely have perished with her mother, who called herself the Duchess of Coulancourt."

Miss Jane Etherton was evidently either not blessed with a woman's heart, or she concealed her feelings—her nose only betraying some little sensation.

"What do you intend doing, Howard?" asked Miss Jane.

"Force her solicitor to produce proofs, of course;" and then, after a moment's thought, he continued, "it would be a good speculation to make her my wife."

Miss Jane's prominent feature became so extremely red, that even her brother remarked, with a malicious laugh:

"Upon my word, Jane, your nose is quite a barometer; it states the effect of your feelings."

Jane did not like the remark, and being quite as caustic as her brother, she replied:

"I am glad that in the midst of your troubles, and I think you will find them difficult to get over, that you have room for ridiculous remarks."

"Tut," laughed the Baronet, "you take a joke too seriously; but do you know, did you ever hear, what kind of girl this Mabel is; when a child, she was a puny, pale-faced, half-starved looking thing."

"I know nothing about her," returned Miss Jane, sharply. "I suppose you can get a look at her if you like; I heard Ellen Goodridge say, who knows the Volneys, and visits at Madame's Villa, she was well enough, but very shy and serious."

"So much the better; qualities I should admire in a wife. One of those Volney girls I understand is going to be married to that Irishman O'Loughlin, who has just been made a commander. He has impudence and brass enough for anything; but how a high family like the Volneys can tolerate a fellow, whom I myself heard say, he 'never had a father or a mother, and that his huge fist was father, mother, and grand-mother to him, and a whole host of relations besides'—I can't comprehend."

"Horrid savage!" said Miss Jane. "What is he like? a

sedan-chair man, I suppose? All the sedan-chair men in London are Irishmen—they have such large legs.”

“Which is the reason they are selected by the fashionable ladies,” said the Baronet; “to sport behind their carriages, with calves to their legs like Swedish turnips.”

As the Baronet said these words, the door opened, and a domestic entered the room with a card on a silver salver.

“A gentleman below, sir, in the reception-room, wishes particularly to see you.”

Sir Howard Etherton took the card, gave a slight start, changing colour as he read aloud, “Captain O’Loughlin.”

Miss Jane sprang from her seat, as if it, and not her nose, was red hot, exclaiming:

“Bless me, how extraordinary! What can this horrid man want? You will surely not see him?”

The servant stared, for he could scarcely think that the tall and handsome man, in the undress uniform of a commander in the navy, could possibly be the horrid man Miss Jane alluded to.

Sir Howard, remembering of old the contempt that O’Loughlin held him in, and how he himself detested him, hesitated whether he would see him or not; but suddenly making up his mind he said:

“Show Captain O’Loughlin up.”

“Dear me!” ejaculated Jane; “I must be gone, I am in such déshabille.”

“Stay where you are,” said the Baronet, sharply; he preferred not being alone. “It is only that horrid Irishman we have been talking of.”

It was too late to retreat, for a firm, active step was heard without; the next moment Captain O’Loughlin entered the room, in his easy off-hand, but gentlemanly manner. He paused on seeing Miss Jane Etherton, but Sir Howard, in a cold, constrained manner, said:

“My sister, Captain O’Loughlin.”

The sailor bowed, and taking a chair, said:

“It is some years, Sir Howard, since we parted, and I must candidly say, I did not expect that we should meet again; but having a strong desire to be of service to a most amiable young lady, I was prevailed upon to wait upon you. Therefore, at the request of Miss Arden, whose generous nature shrinks from the prospect of law proceedings between near relations, and that her name should come before the public on a question of birth——”

“I confess,” interrupted the Baronet, “I do not quite understand you, Captain O’Loughlin; I have no near relations beyond my own family that I know of.”

“A very few words more,” observed O’Loughlin, haughtily,

"will explain my meaning. Miss Arden, or rather Etherton, as she is entitled to bear that name, requests me to say that—provided there is no opposition to her claims, on your part, or to her assuming the rightful name, and no doubts raised about her birth—she is quite willing to resign all claims to her portion of the Etherton property you now hold."

"In other words, Captain O'Loughlin," interrupted the Baronet, in a cutting tone, "you offer me a bribe to acknowledge an impostor as my cousin?"

The eyes of the Irishman flashed dangerously, as the Baronet, who saw the coming storm, hastened to add: "Such may, I say, be the case; for who can tell? It would be against my conscience."

"Oh! to the—then," muttered O'Loughlin; seeing a lady present, he merely said, "Oh, do not distress your conscience, Sir Howard. When we two served on board the old Victory, you were not much troubled with that scarce commodity. Now——"

"I will thank you, Captain O'Loughlin," interrupted Sir Howard, with a flush upon his cheek, rivalling the hue on the nose of his astonished sister, "to confine yourself to the object of your visit. All I have to say is, that I will never acknowledge the young person you speak of as relative of mine, till the very fullest proofs of her birth are furnished. There are no proofs of Mr. Granby Arden having contracted marriage with any lady; therefore, once for all, I tell you, I shall oppose the person calling herself Mabel Arden, claiming the name of Etherton, to the full extent of my power."

"By the powers of love, you are welcome to do so; I am glad to hear it;" his cheek flushing anger and contempt, as he rose from his seat. "You will be sorry for this, ere long. I was against making you the offer, because we know that Miss Arden's mother, the Duchess of Coulaucourt, is now in Paris, restored to her estates, and living under the protection of the Directory——"

The Baronet started, and evidently changed colour; but Captain O'Loughlin continued quite unconcerned. "Therefore, though there may be a little delay in communicating with Madame Coulaucourt, and some caution, as the Directory are stringent respecting communication with England, we shall be able to obtain all the particulars of her marriage, and the birth of her two children. By-the-bye, it has been whispered that young Julian Arden, supposed to have perished at the siege of Lyons, escaped; or at all events there is no proof of his death. So now, having fulfilled the wishes of Miss Arden, and relieved her feelings of regret at proceeding against you in this case, without first amicably trying to settle it, I shall wish you good

morning;" and with a cold bow to the stupified Miss Jane, whose thin nose became purple, whilst her cheeks grew proportionately paler, Captain O'Loughlin walked out of the room, with a light and easy step, and as he descended the stairs, the confounded and bewildered Baronet caught the sound of his voice humming the air of "The girl I left behind me."

Captain O'Loughlin, passing out from the house, mounted his horse, that a groom held, satisfied in his mind that he had left the honourable Baronet quite sufficient to employ his thoughts.

"Confound the fellow, I always disliked him," he muttered, as he rode down the avenue; "every one gives him a worse character than his father."

Captain O'Loughlin had undertaken this visit to Sir Howard Etherton at Mabel's earnest request. Most important intelligence had reached Madame Volney from Paris relative to her own affairs. Her letters came through Hamburgh. The correspondent mentioned, as a piece of news, that Madame Coulan-court, formerly Duchesse de Coulan-court, was living in Paris, and had had her estates restored to her, but that she was under strict surveillance. There was no other remark in the letter; but this was quite sufficient to fill Mabel's heart with rapturous joy. Her beloved mother was living, and well; this knowledge seemed to her the greatest boon Providence could bestow upon her.

Mr. Stanmore was extremely anxious, when he heard the intelligence, that some mode of communication might be contrived with Madame de Coulan-court, so that Mabel's birth could be clearly established, as this would be absolutely necessary to substantiate her claims to her uncle's legacy. Mr. Stanmore, however, was made aware by Madame Volney that any attempt to correspond with Mabel's mother would subject her to the utmost rigour of the French Government.

"At all events," said the solicitor, "I will try a feeler to Sir Howard Etherton's solicitor;" and he did: but Mabel, who could not bear to make her name and position a subject of public conversation by enforcing her claims, without having a single proof to bring forward, begged Captain O'Loughlin to try and bring Sir Howard Etherton to amicable terms. She was quite willing to relinquish all claim on the Etherton property, provided Sir Howard offered no opposition to her being publicly known as the niece of Sir Oscar de Bracy, and the daughter of Mr. Granby Arden.

Captain O'Loughlin undertook the embassy to Sir Howard Etherton; and knowing that gentleman's penurious disposition, he thought he would eagerly grasp at the large sum of money he would gain by his compliance, though the Captain grumbled terribly at such a sacrifice on Mabel's part. Mabel insisted that it would be a very hard case for Sir Howard to have

to pay that sum ; so, to satisfy her, he rode over to Etherton Hall, and returned quite pleased at having failed, for he would not be persuaded that Mabel had any right to forego or abandon her natural rights. About fourteen or fifteen days after this interview Captain O'Loughlin was appointed to the command of a very handsome and dashing corvette, the *Onyx* and had orders to sail immediately and join the ship under Vice-Admiral Colboy, cruising off Brest.

After a most affectionate leave-taking with his betrothed and Mabel, Captain O'Loughlin proceeded to join his ship. In our next chapter we return to our hero and his attached follower Bill Saunders.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE left Lieutenant Thornton and Bill Saunders scrambling over the rough rocks, after swimming from the sunken lugger. It was not yet daybreak, and our hero was anxious to get as far from the wreck as possible. They never thought of the man whom they had left on board ; and whether he had swam ashore or perished by drowning they knew not. It was a remarkably rough road over those rocks, and Bill Saunders, as he stumbled and bruised his shins against the sharp stones, vowed vengeance against the first *Monsieur* he could conveniently knock on the head ; declaring that all their misfortunes arose from not pitching the two Frenchmen, who sought refuge in the fore cuddy of the lugger, overboard ; had he done so, they could not have set the lugger on fire.

To add to Bill's dissatisfaction and vexation, the garments he had put on were those of a middle-sized man—Bill, like his master, was six feet—and being soaked through, they clung to him so tightly that he could hardly walk.

"Serve me right," growled Bill ; "I'm sailing under false colours. The beggar that owned these clothes had legs no bigger than handspikes."

Just as day began to dawn, they had passed over all the rocks, and come upon a fine sandy beach, and right before them appeared a long range of lofty sand-hills. As the sun rose, our hero paused between two of these sand-hills, covered here and there with stunted marine plants.

"Now, Bill," he observed, turning to his companion, and observing with a smile the oddity of his appearance, his trousers scarcely reaching his knees, his coat too short, and stretched to bursting, and on his head a red cap, like a night-cap. "Why,

Bill, you made but a bad fit of it last night ; your garments are far too small."

"Small!" repeated Bill, with infinite disgust, looking down at his powerful limbs, encased so tightly from the wet that they seemed a part of his skin. "They aint fit, sir, for a powder-monkey. There was no time, you know, to try others; it's very lucky your honour found the skipper's; he was a tall, powerful brute; but I had no such luck."

"Never mind, Bill, they will fit better when dry, and as I have secured some cash from the skipper's desk—fair spoil in war—I will soon new rig you when we get to a town; but mind, you must not speak a word. I shall pass you off as being dumb."

Bill smiled grimly and clenched his huge hand.

"Yes, sir, all right; I'll be dumb enough, seeing as how I don't understand their confounded parley-voo; but they had better keep their hands off me. I'll never spare a couple of lubbers again, if I can get my fingers round their throats."

"Well, now pull off your garments; here's a fine hot April sun; they will dry in less than an hour."

"Never get them off, sir, without a knife. Let them dry where they are; it's all the same to me. Just let me dry your clothes, sir."

"It is not likely we shall be intruded on here," said Lieutenant Thornton, sticking his jacket on a stunted shrub; "and I think after we cross this line of sand-hills, we shall not be more than three miles from Fecamp, where, with a little skill and management, we may be able to seize a fishing-boat, and put to sea."

"But what are we to do for grub, sir? I feel rather queer as it is."

"I can purchase some food," said the Lieutenant, "at the first cottage we come to; only mind, not a word."

Just then Bill beheld a rabbit, and gave chase; pitched his cap and then his shoes at it, and finally, with exceeding chagrin, saw it dart into a hole.

"Why, Bill, you never dreamt of running down a rabbit; you have burst your trousers."

Bill cast a rueful glance at a fragment of cloth that fluttered in the wind.

"The beggar carried too much sail, sir. I thought we might roast him over a few sticks."

"But we are not Indians, Bill, and have not their skill in eliciting fire from two pieces of wood. Here is some twine I found in this jacket; you had better take in that rent you have made."

Bill sat down; thanks to his chase after the rabbit, he could

get off his garments; and, being ingenious, when he had dried, he contrived to lengthen them, and patch them up, and after another hour's rest they resumed their journey with dry clothes. The sun was exceedingly hot for the time of year, especially amongst the sand-hills.

By this time our travellers were ravenously hungry, having been twenty-four hours without food; all they partook of on board the lugger being wine and brandy. The sand-hills were three miles across from north to south, and appeared to extend for many miles along the coast. From the summit of one, the highest of the group, they obtained a fine clear view of the country beyond, which appeared well wooded and cultivated, with a village spire peeping out from a clump of trees.

"I suppose yonder village is Fecamp," said our hero; "at least I judge so, from the look I took at the chart on the unlucky day we ran in to cut out that confounded lugger."

"I hope we shall be able to get some grog, sir; upon my conscience, your honour, I'm as empty as a dry water-cask."

"I will get you plenty of food, Bill; only keep your mouth shut."

"Whilst I'm eating, sir," said Bill, with a grin.

Accordingly they made direct for the village. They passed several of the country people on their way, who looked at the two powerful men with evident curiosity. They at last got in the high road from the village to some other place, and presently met two very neatly attired country girls, with light baskets on their arms, and a farmer's market cart, driven by a young lad, following. Lieutenant Thornton stopped and inquired the name of the village before them from one of the girls, a young and very pretty one.

The girl looked at the lieutenant with considerable surprise, saying with a curtsy:

"Ceaux, monsieur;" and then adding with some slight hesitation, "you are strangers?"

"Yes," returned William Thornton, "we have just been landed from an English vessel of war. Is there a cabaret in the village, my pretty maid?"

"Well, no there is not, monsieur," she replied; "but as you are strangers and may be far from your home, if you go to the house of Dame Moret and say her daughter directed you there, she will, I know, give you food and lodging for the asking."

"Thank you, my good girl, I will do so, and not forget your pretty face when I get there. Are you going far?"

The young girl smiled and said:

"Only to Havre, monsieur."

"Havre!" repeated the lieutenant, with surprise; "why, are we so close to Havre?"

Bill, at this time, was eyeing the eggs and fowls with a ravenous eye. After again thanking the girl, the lieutenant moved on.

"So," said our hero, "we are only three or four miles from Havre after all; too close to be pleasant."

The fact is, they had merely doubled the cast Head, where the land took a curve inwards. After a short walk they approached the village, which, in truth, consisted of a few small cottages and a large and comfortable farm-house and buildings. A lad pointed to the large house as Dame Moret's, when asked. In the front were congregated several cows, and a girl milking them; sundry other farm-animals, in the shape of turkeys and fowls, which a very nice and respectable-looking old woman was carefully feeding, keeping away the old birds that the young might have fair play.

The dame looked up as Lieutenant Thornton approached, which enabled a sage-looking old turkey-cock to walk off with the entire of a large barley-cake she was breaking up for the young birds.

"Ma foi!" exclaimed the old dame, making a grab at his tail, "vous êtes un grand voleur, Maitre Jaques."

Bill thought the barley-cake much too good for "Maitre Jacques," so he grabbed at him and got the cake, which proceeding created an immense row among the turkeys; but Bill very quietly commenced demolishing the cake, looking as innocent as a child.

"Mon Dieu," said the dame, laughing, "you are worse than Maitre Jaques; had you no breakfast, pauvre homme?"

"No, dame," said our hero, laughing, and trying to be heard in the din that ensued amongst the poultry. "Your good daughter recommended us to come here, as there is no cabaret in this village. We have been landed from an English ship. We have money to pay you for what you give us."

"Ah, ça! keep your money, my handsome lad. We can afford to give you something to eat and drink, without robbing Maitre Jacques of his breakfast. Where did you meet my girl?"

"About a mile from here," said the Lieutenant.

"You are a stranger to these parts," said the dame, dismissing her anxious audience with a shake of her apron; "come with me into the house."

"Lieutenant Thornton and Bill followed the dame into the kitchen of the farm-house, where a huge iron pot was boiling over a roaring log fire in a wide chimney, and a girl stirring the contents with a large ladle. The smell from the steam made Bill Saunders's eyes water, and, forgetting his being a dummy, he rubbed his huge hands, saying:

"My eyes, here's a smell!" and then seeing by the look of our hero that he had committed an indiscretion, for the old dame looked at him in surprise, he coughed with such vehemence as to startle a curly-haired dog enjoying himself at the fire out of all propriety, for he flew at Bill instantly.

"Eh!" said Dame Moret, "what does your comrade say?" looking into Lieutenant Thornton's face.

"He's a Dutchman," said our hero, scarcely able to keep from laughing at the grotesque efforts Bill was making to cover his mistake.

"Dutchman!" said the old dame; "very like English. I had a noble lady once for a mistress," and the dame sighed, "and she was English, though her second husband was a Frenchman. But sit down; I love the English, and if he or you either are English, you are quite safe with me. To tell the truth, though you do speak the language very well, you don't look like Frenchmen, and your big comrade seems like a man squeezed into a boy's clothes."

"Well, dame," returned our hero, struck forcibly by the woman's words, "I will not deceive you; we are English."

"Ah! monsieur, you will upset the pot," said the dame, turning round, for Bill seeing the girl trying to lift the heavy utensil, and the girl being a very good-looking one, went to help her, instigated by the cravings of his stomach, which prompted a speedy replenishing. But Bill very scientifically finished the operation, put the logs together, and laughing, gave the girl a kiss, for which he received a box in the face by the laughing and by no means displeased damsel, for Bill was a very handsome specimen of an English tar.

"I had better put you both into my little parlour," said Dame Moret with a smile, "for the girls and the men will be coming in to their mid-day meal; and this comrade of yours, monsieur, for I see you are not of the same grade, will probably betray you, and that would not do."

"You must be more discreet, Bill," said our hero, seriously, after the good dame had left them in a neat little chamber, as clean as a new pin, with some pretty plants creeping all over the window, and an image of some saint in a glass case over the little chimney-piece.

"I thought to pass you off for a Dutchman when you so indiscreetly showed that you were neither dumb nor blind. You must not be kissing the girls that way."

"Me a Dutchman, your honour!" said Bill, trying to look behind him, "Lord love ye, sir, I'm not Dutch built; and as to kissing the girl, 'twas the force of hunger. It's human nature, we must have food, sir, of some kind."

"Well, I agree with you there, Bill, though I never classed

kisses with our other articles of consumption for the stomach. But in future be steady, for I assure you a head is worth very little in France at this moment."

"Well, blow me if they shall have my head or tail either," said Bill, putting his hand up to see if his pig-tail, which he had thrust under the collar of his jacket, was safe.

Dame Moret just then entered the room with a smoking hot dish, of what we should call in England a beggar's dish, or Irish stew. This she placed on a clean cloth, with two wooden platters and knives and forks. There was so much genuine kindness in the old dame's actions, and her manner and language were so different from a provincial farm woman, that Lieutenant Thornton, who had not ceased pondering over the words she had said, of having once served an English lady whose second husband was a Frenchman, hazarded a remark, looking the dame in the face.

"I once," he commenced, "performed a service for an English lady, whose second husband was a Frenchman. She was then called the Duchess of Coulancourt."

"Eh! mon Dieu!" exclaimed Dame Moret, nearly dropping a bottle of wine she was taking from a cupboard, "what is that you say? Is it possible then you are the brave English lad who saved the duchess's daughter at Toulon?"

"I am," said our hero, greatly astonished.

"Mon Dieu! how rejoiced I am;" and putting her arm round his neck, her eyes filled with tears, she kissed his cheek with the affection of a mother.

"My eyes! Ah! Blow me if this aint a go!" exclaimed Bill, who not understanding a word, and beholding his officer kissed by an old woman, was confounded.

"Talk of kissing," he muttered to himself, eyeing the mess on the dish, "keel haul me, if I wouldn't rather kiss that young one outside for a week. Ax your pardon, ma'am," said the seaman, starting back, seeing the dame turn round to him, "if your going to buss me, if you please let me have a pull at the mess there first."

"Hallo! Dame Moret," shouted a coarse, loud voice from the kitchen, "where the diable have you stowed yourself? Show your nose out here. I want you."

Dame Moret started, looked frightened, but immediately put her hand on the door, saying—

"I'm coming, Pierre Gaudet! I'm coming!" and then whispered to our hero, who stood confounded, for Gaudet was the name of the Captain of the privateer Vengeance, "Do not speak out loud; I will lock the door; remain quiet. That is a fierce man outside, though he is my son-in-law;" and then the dame passed out, locking the door after her, and putting the key in her pocket.

CHAPTER XIX.

"WHAT in the world brings you here this morning?" exclaimed Dame Moret.

Our hero could hear every word spoken, and such an effect had the name of Gaudet upon him, that hungry as he was he paused to listen. Not so Bill; neither understanding nor caring what was saying outside, but thinking solely of the stew before him, he looked imploringly at his officer, and pointed to the smoking viands, rubbing his lips with the back of his bony hands. Our hero made him a sign to help himself. Four-and-twenty hours, fast destroys politeness, so putting a fair portion on his plate, Bill retired to a corner and made himself happy.

Our hero was hungry, but he was also anxious and curious. When Dame Moret said, "What in the world brought you here this morning, Pierre Gaudet? I thought you were at sea in the Vengeance," he listened eagerly.

"Curse the salt water and the Vengeance, too!" returned the man. "I'm ruined; two cursed Englishmen contrived to get off yesterday with the Vengeance, and somehow or other she caught fire at sea, and they ran her ashore, on the coast here. I want help."

"But, I don't understand you," said Dame Moret; "how could two Englishmen run away with the lugger?"

"Give me a platter of that mess and a bottle of your best wine, and I will tell you all about it," said Pierre Gaudet.

William Thornton turned round and sat down, and commenced satisfying his appetite, listening attentively, nevertheless, to what Pierre Gaudet said.

"There are more men in the kitchen," whispered our hero, "for I can hear the murmur of their voices; though the captain of the privateer's is by far the loudest."

Having recounted the history of the taking of the Vengeance, the captain then told of their re-taking it; and how he and the mate of the Bon-Citoyen seized and fastened down, in the cabin of the privateer, one of the officers and a seaman.

"And why, Pierre Gaudet," said Dame Moret, evidently in a surprised tone, "did you treat a brave officer, though an enemy, in that cruel way?"

"Ah! sacre! how tender-hearted you are, dame," savagely laughed the privateer's man; "why you must know it was the cursed young devil that shot my brother-in-law through the head, and thus won the schooner, one of the fastest and best boats in the line; and when Jacques Boussain would have knocked the fiery young diable on the head, that vile seaman we secured at the same time, drove his cutlass into him, and left

him for dead. I swore when I heard this, for we in the Vengeance escaped in the fog, that if ever it was in my power, I'd take a bloody revenge on those two men; and, *sacre tonnerre de Dieu*, when I had them, I gloried in the revenge I intended to take. However, I'll find them yet; if they escaped out of the Vengeance, and they must have done so, for else how could she have run ashore where she did, and the wind a side one? But where is your son, dame? I want him and his crew to go round with the next tide to where the vessel is; the wind is off shore now—something may be saved out of her, or her hull got off."

"He went down in the lugger with the ebb tide," said Dame Moret; "for we heard at daylight of a craft on fire being ashore at Caux point; but they did not get out to sea, for they were late on the ebb and grounded. You will find them a mile or two down the creek, waiting for the flood tide."

"*Sacre!* that's lucky! Then we will be off and join them. Come, my lads, finish your grub, and let us join Moret and his crew; we may get her off and into the creek; the tide's rising, and the water's smooth."

There was then a murmuring of several voices, the laugh of some female, and the party left the house.

Lieutenant Thornton remained immersed in thought; so strange did it appear to him that any one connected with the Duchess of Coulaucourt should be living on that part of the French coast, and that he should so strangely stumble upon the spot; he felt he was in a dangerous situation, and he wondered that Pierre Gaudet did not hear about them from the girl who had seen them enter, and the one that was cooking, with whom Bill Saunders had been so over polite, or the lad who had directed them to the house. Altogether it was a strange adventure.

Bill, who by this time had satisfied his appetite, looked at his officer, but was afraid to open his lips. However, in a few minutes the door was unlocked, and Dame Moret entered the room, closing the door.

"Ah! *mon pauvre garçon*," said the dame, "what an escape you have had from that sea brute! You must not stay here a moment; but I will save you from him. Why he did not kill you when you were in his power, I can't think."

"But, my good dame, I am longing to ask you a thousand questions. Did you hear what became of the duchess and Jean Plessis, after she was carried off at Toulon?"

"Oh, yes, my dear sir, and saw her too, not three months ago; but there is no time now for explanations. I must seek a place of safety, for my son-in-law will surely try to track you. Where I send you I shall be able to communicate with

and see you, and in a few days I may be enabled to get you to sea."

"I am sure," replied our hero, "I know not how to express my gratitude. I will go anywhere you please for a day or two. I cannot promise to bear confinement longer; besides, I am perhaps placing you in peril. These are sad times in this country."

"Oh, thank God," said Dame Moret, "the worst is passed! the Reign of Terror has ended; but we must not lose time; some odd circumstance might bring Pierre Gaudet back. Do you go out through that door," continued the dame, "and you will thus get out at the back into the orchard. I will send my daughter round to meet you; follow her, and she will take you to a place where you will both be safe; but pray impress upon your follower the necessity of caution and quietness."

So saying, Dame Moret passed out through the door, and Lieutenant Thornton, turning to Bill, explained to him their situation, and the necessity of discretion.

"Bless your honour, if we had sailed out and knocked that piratical beggar, the captain of the Vengeance, on the head, we should be all right. I wish I had my hand on his throttle."

"There were several men with him, Bill," said Lieutenant Thornton; "but we must do nothing rashly; so keep quiet now, and follow me."

Passing through another door facing the one they had entered the room by, our hero perceived they were in a large species of hall, with a wide wooden staircase, leading up into a heavy, clumsy gallery. Seeing a door open at the further end, he walked on, and, passing out, perceived a young woman, the same who was milking the cows when they first arrived, coming across a wide, paved court, with a gate at the end leading into a large orchard, very thickly planted.

The girl, when she came up, looked our hero in the face, and said—

"Do you, monsieur, follow me at a short distance; and if we pass any one, do not speak or notice them."

She then turned round and walked on rapidly, opening the gate into the orchard.

Lieutenant Thornton and his companion followed, and crossing the orchard, the girl passed out through a wicker gate, in an immensely thick, lofty hedge. There was a narrow road outside, and along this their guide proceeded, at a quick pace, till she came to a stile, where she quitted the road, and crossed two fields; and then our hero perceived right before them, surrounded by woods, a château, or country mansion, of considerable dimensions, with its quaint, high, tiled roof, innumerable chimneys and gables, and a fine lawn, bordered with lofty trees before its front. The girl led the way towards the back; a high stone

wall shut in the out offices and large gardens, in which was a strong door, which she unlocked, and made a motion with her hand for them to come up, which they did, and entered through the door into a courtyard of considerable extent, and scrupulously neat.

"We have been very fortunate," said the young woman; "I do not think any one observed us; it is a fête day at Havre, and nearly all our lads and lassess are gone there."

"What château is this?" asked our hero, looking up at the building, which seemed to have been recently repaired and painted.

"This château!" said the girl, surprised. "Why, I thought mother told you! This is Coulancourt."

"Coulancourt!" returned our hero, with a start.

"Yes," said Annette Moret, the dame's eldest unmarried daughter. "This is where the good duke was born; he was then only the Count de Coulancourt, his elder brother the duke held the great estates near Lyons, at whose death the late duke came to the title, and went to live near Lyons, and there married an English lady. But mon Dieu! how I am talking, and keeping you, monsieur, standing here in the yard!"

Lieutenant Thornton was so much surprised that he stood immersed in thought, till roused by Annette requesting him to walk in, having unlocked a door from a bunch of keys in her little basket.

Our hero looked round astonished, for all within the mansion was neat, and carefully preserved; they passed into the kitchen, where every utensil was bright and tidy, as if a dozen fairy hands had presided over them.

"Really, Mademoiselle Annette," said our hero, "one would imagine some fairies had the care of everything here; all is so neat and carefully arranged."

Annette laughed, saying—

"Oh, monsieur, the fairies are my sister and myself, and our farm girls. Madame Coulancourt spares no expense, and orders that every article should be kept as neat as if she lived here herself. Her intendant and his daughter come here twice a year to receive rents, and see that madame's tenants want for nothing. The people here would die for madame if she required it. The intendant is a good man, and his daughter is a pretty nice girl; they stay here a month, perhaps more, at a time. But come upstairs, monsieur; my mother desired me to put you in Monsieur l'Intendant's room, and your man can have his servant's chamber."

Full of thought Lieutenant Thornton followed Annette, who was a very tidy and well-mannered girl, though not so pretty as her younger sister, whom our hero had met on the road.

"I did not bring the keys of the grand saloon, monsieur, b here is Monsieur L'Intendant's room ;" and throwing open a door, she entered, and unbolted and unbarred the shutters. This room was small, but remarkably neat ; there was a book-case full of books, a fowling-piece, a brace of pistols over the mantel-piece, a telescope on a stand, and sundry useful articles on the tables.

"That door," said Annette, pointing to one, "leads to a bedroom, which you can occupy ; all is aired and prepared, for we expect monsieur and his daughter in a week."

"Does no one inhabit the château ? Are you not afraid of its being plundered ?"

"Oh dear, no, monsieur ; two men sleep every night in the out buildings, and one walks about all night with a big dog. Indeed, for the last six months this precaution has been unnecessary, for there are no strangers about now ; things have dropped into their old way, thank God ! They were terrible times three years ago."

"If the men who sleep here," said our hero, "find out, which they must, that we are here, it may come to the ears of Captain Gaudet, and that would bring your good mother into trouble."

"No fear of that, monsieur. When they are told that madame has ordered the persons who are here not to be disturbed or spoken of, it's enough. Not a word will be said. Besides, Captain Gaudet is detested here ; my eldest sister made an unfortunate match when she married him. He is from St. Valery, and was captain of a small brigantine ; but when the war broke out he joined with his brother-in-law, also of St. Valery, to fit out a privateer, and being fortunate they after a time purchased the Vengeance, and the Bon-Citoyen, and cruised in company. Since the war he has grown so ferocious and cruel, that the men about these parts, who shipped with him at first, have left him, and my brother, who owns a coasting and fishing lugger, will have nothing to do with him. My sister, who lives near Havre, and has two children, contrives somehow to manage him when not excited by drink, but when drunk he is terrible. My youngest sister you met this morning has gone to Havre to see her sister, and take her a present of fowls' eggs and butter. Now, monsieur, I must go ; in the evening I will return with food and all things you may require ; till then keep the door locked. You can walk in the great walled garden, for no one can see into it, and it is in very nice order."

The young man expressed his gratitude and thanks to Annette Moret for the kindness he received ; but Bill, whom they found in the kitchen very quietly lighting a fire from materials he had found in a cellar, said—

"I hope, sir, you will be so good as to ax for a small bit of backee and a pipe."

"Backee!" interrupted Annette, with a smile. "I understand sailors can't live without tobacco;" and taking a key from her basket, she unlocked a cupboard, in which Bill, with an exclamation of joy, beheld a row of pipes; and taking down a jar, Annette showed him it was full of the weed he so dearly loved. This so transported him, that he was within an ace of rewarding Annette with an embrace, had not our hero's look and the girl's serious manner stopped him.

When Annette had retired, Bill was allowed to smoke a pipe in the court-yard, for, strange to say, Lieutenant Thornton never at any period of his life indulged in tobacco in any shape.

Leaving Bill, therefore, to his pipe and his meditations, he returned to the intendant's sitting-room, and throwing himself into a comfortable arm-chair, fell into a profound sleep from fatigue, not having rested the two previous nights.

CHAPTER XX.

OUR young hero must have slept soundly, for he did not awake when, in the dusk of the evening, Dame Moret and her daughter entered the room, quietly laid a cloth, put some cold fowl and ham upon the table, and finally lighted a lamp, which aroused him. He started up in great surprise, and seeing Dame Moret, said—

"I was so overpowered with sleep that I could really not resist indulging. I fear I am putting you to a great deal of trouble."

"Oh no, monsieur, that you are not. I know how madame would have me act if she knew you were here; and now I know who you are, I am as anxious to serve you as madame herself. But I pray you take some supper; I have given your man his in the kitchen; he seems a very kind, simple-hearted creature, anxious to do anything; and after you have supped we will have half-an-hour's conversation."

"It will afford me much pleasure, my good dame," said our hero, "for I long to ask a great many questions."

"Very well; now pray take your supper, and I will come up by-and-by, when I have put some things to rights for your man. It's a pity he does not understand our language."

"Oh, he will pick it up very soon, Dame Moret," said Lieutenant Thornton, with a smile, "for he is inclined to go to the fountain head for instruction."

The good dame laughed, and hoping he would make a good meal, retired.

Our hero did eat heartily, for he was but one-and-twenty, and of a high and fearless disposition, and his critical situation did not trouble him; he scarcely bestowed a thought upon it. The loss of his time from his profession was the only thing that vexed him, and he resolved in a day or two to make an attempt to get off in a boat, and take his chance of reaching England, or some vessel of war."

When Dame Moret thought he had finished his supper, she and her daughter Annette re-entered the room. The latter removed the things, and the dame sat down, first putting a bottle of excellent Burgundy before our hero.

"You will find that very good wine, sir, for Monsieur l'Intendant loves a bottle of good Burgundy, and madame sent a good store here from Paris."

"I am astonished at this place being called Coulancourt," said our hero, "and at hearing that madame is living in Paris, and restored to her estates, for I feared she was in the power of her enemies."

"I am so anxious to ask after her daughter, Mademoiselle Mabel," said Dame Moret; "she was but a child, I may say, when she was here—six years old, I think—but she was as lovely, engaging a little girl as ever eyes beheld; and her little brother, Julian—alas! what a fate was his, so young, and such a noble boy!"

"Well, dame, I will tell you all about Mabel, and you shall tell me about Madame Coulancourt. How I should like to see her, and tell her how tenderly her daughter loves and remembers her."

Lieutenant Thornton then told the attentive dame all his adventures, from the period Mabel was placed under his care till their arrival in England, and the singular abduction of the papers and jewels from the casket entrusted to him; and how Mabel was placed in a highly-respectable school, and under the care of a most kind French lady, the widow of Admiral Volney; finishing with an account of his mishap on board the *Vengeance*, and the cruel conduct of Captain Gaudet.

"Ah!" said the old dame, with a sigh, "he's a sad, sad man!—as fierce and cruel as a wild beast when he drinks, and latterly he drinks very hard. He was not always so; before he became a privateer's man he was very well; but I believe, sir, privateering makes a man very reckless and careless about shedding blood—they become very hardened."

"It is often the case, dame; they know they seldom get quarter from their opponents, and that renders them reckless and savage. Then the love of plunder increases, they become little better than pirates."

"You mentioned," he continued, a moment after, "that

Madame Coulancourt was residing in Paris, and that her estates were restored to her. How did she escape from her enemies?"

"By their being guillotined, monsieur; but I will tell you all the particulars.

"I was, you must know, nurse to the Count de Coulancourt, who was born in this château. He became duke on his elder brother's death, and, alas! was beheaded in his forty-eighth year; and I am now seventy-four years of age myself. When Monsieur de Coulancourt became duke, he bestowed upon me and my husband the farm and land we now hold; but we have added to it since. Fourteen years ago I lost my poor man, but the bon Dieu was good to me; I had kind and good children, and our farm prospered. When the duke married our kind and beautiful mistress, at Lyons, he took her to Paris, with her two handsome children, and, after a time, he came here. At this period the revolution had not yet shown itself formidable; nobody looked for the dethronement of their king, much less his cruel murder. Still the land was troubled, and people were unsettled, and at times riotous, and fiercely denouncing the nobility and clergy.

"The duke and duchess remained here in tranquillity, greatly beloved by all their dependents; and here was born an heir to the duke—as fine a baby as you ever beheld. Alas! it lived but three months, and was unfortunately, to the deep grief of its parents, carried off by the small-pox, then raging fearfully in this district. A summons from our ill-fated King called the duke to his council.

"We never saw our beloved master again. The whole country became convulsed, father rose against son, and son against father. Thank God! we all survived the convulsion here, except our poor priest and one or two of the small gentry. The former was killed in the streets of Havre—but you know enough of the horrors that took place. Years rolled by, and the estate of the Coulancourts fell to the nation, for they said the duke was a malignant and an aristocrat, and it went into neglect, for no one came near it. In these remote parts, we could not hear what had become of the duchess and her children. People were afraid to speak during the Reign of Terror. At length that ended, and we thanked God that we were spared. Time went on, and at last, to our intense joy, we had a message from Paris sent down to us to say that the duchess—or rather, madame, for titles were all extinguished in France—had been tried in Paris, and was declared innocent of every crime against the state; the rulers restored to her Coulancourt and some other property, but the great bulk of the duke's estates the nation still retained. This was a relief to us all. Workmen

were employed to restore the château, and madame expressed a wish that I would travel up to Paris to see her, and I did. Oh, mon Dieu! monsieur, how we wept when we saw each other! Ah! she was still beautiful, though thin and care-worn. She was ignorant whether her child had reached England, and she dared not communicate with that country. She told me how she confided her daughter to a young and gallant lad, and that he had safely got her on board ship, for that good Monsieur Jean Plessis—no better man living—watched over her and madame with unceasing care. She told me that the officer's name was Thornton, and that in the casket there were jewels of value, and nearly twenty thousand francs in gold, besides certificates of Mabel's birth, her brother's also, and of her own marriage with her first husband.

"I stayed nearly a month in Paris with my mistress; she could scarcely bear to part with me, but said, when she could get leave, she would come and live in Coulancourt. She ordered her intendant, Monsieur Jean Plessis——"

"Jean Plessis," inquired our hero; "was he a married man?"

"Yes, monsieur, and a very nice, pretty, good lady his wife is; and his daughter, she is nearly eighteen, is a remarkably pretty, clever demoiselle—plays the great piano in the saloon so nicely. She and her mother remain six months of the year here, and we keep up the place just as if madame herself was expected."

"Do you think a letter could be got safely to Madame Coulancourt?" asked our hero, anxiously.

"Oh dear yes, monsieur, quite easily. My son writes to Monsieur Jean Plessis constantly; he could enclose one for madame."

"Then I will write this night. It will so ease her mind to hear all about Mabel; though it will grieve her to hear of the loss of the contents of the casket."

"Oh, the joy of knowing her beloved child is safe and well," said the dame, "will render her grief for the loss of the casket trifling."

"Do not you think, dame, that we might get a boat in this navigable creek, and be able to put to sea?"

"Not for a little while, monsieur; quite impossible. I have not yet told you about the Vengeance. Captain Gaudet, with the help of my son's lugger and another craft from Havre, have floated the hull of the Vengeance, and towed her inside of the creek and stranded her. One of my son's crew came back to tell us the news; and, besides, they have sent out two coast-guard boats to watch the coast. They say there is a corvette or a frigate off and on, as if with the intention of landing,

or looking out for some of the crew of the ship that thought to cut out the Vengeance; so you had better stay quiet for a few days. It would be terrible to arouse suspicion. My son-in-law, Captain Gaudet, you may be sure, will watch the creek."

Lieutenant Thornton thought for a moment, and then said—

"Well, Dame Moret, I should be sorry to do anything rash, and perhaps bring trouble on those who have so kindly assisted me. I will write to Madame Coulandcourt to-night. How long do you suppose it would take to have an answer from Madame Coulandcourt?"

"Not more than five or six days, monsieur. I will send the letters from Havre by the post."

"Well, then I will wait till I hear from madame before I attempt my escape, and when I do make an effort for freedom I shall not, I trust, involve any one in my mishap should I fail."

"Ah! mon Dieu! you must be guided," said Dame Moret; "you are young and sanguine; but to try to get out of the country now will be a very hazardous attempt."

"I should like," said our hero, "to obtain a change of garments for several reasons."

"They may easily be procured," said Dame Moret. "My son will get you a plain country gentleman's sporting costume. I will give out that a young friend of Monsieur l'Intendant is coming here for a week's fishing in our trout streams; as you speak the language so well you may amuse yourself in that way without creating any suspicion, but your man must change his dress also, and he can then pass for your servant."

Lieutenant Thornton was pleased with this arrangement; as he would thus avoid confinement, a thing he detested, and he was fond of trout-fishing.

"I have quite funds enough, dame," said our hero, taking out from his belt some gold pieces, to the amount of ten pounds.

"These will purchase most of the articles I require."

"You had better keep them, monsieur," said the dame, "for a time of need. We will get you whatever you require. Madame would be very angry indeed if we did not."

In vain our hero insisted; the dame was obstinate, so he allowed her to have her own way, resolving to have his another time.

After some further conversation Dame Moret rose to retire, telling the gentleman he would find his room ready, and that one of her daughters would be in attendance morning and evening. Our hero insisted that she should not take that trouble, as Bill was an excellent cook, as most seamen are, and that a few simple necessities was all that they required, and it would attract less observation.

Dame Moret smiled

"Oh, as to that, monsieur, there is no fear, for every day some of my family come here to dust the furniture and keep things neat; besides, they all know the intendant is expected in a few days, and may bring visitors with him."

After Dame Moret had retired, our hero sat down, taking paper, pens, and ink from an open desk the old dame showed him, and spent an hour or two writing to Madame Coulancourt the full particulars of everything that had occurred to Mabel and himself since their parting from her. He also mentioned the discovery he had made, through Madame Volney's communication, with respect to her brother, and the finding of the portrait, asking if she thought it were possible to trace the papers and effects lost by Madame Volney when forced to fly from Paris.

This detail committed to paper, he resolved to await the return of an answer to his letter before he made any attempt at an escape. He had a great desire to hear what became of his commander, Sir Sidney Smith, whether he remained at Havre, or was sent further into the interior.

The next day Rose, the youngest daughter of Dame Moret, the damsel he had first spoken to, and who had so kindly and fortunately directed him to her mother's, came to the château to take his letter, and to provide for their wants for the day. She brought in her basket coffee, eggs, and poultry. Rose was a very pretty modest girl of seventeen, and looked quite pleased at being of service to our hero, who, not being in love, could see that Rose had a pair of very bright and sparkling eyes, and as neat a foot and ankle as any maiden in the province.

"I have brought you the key of the saloon, monsieur," said Rose; "you may like to look at the pictures; and there is a piano and harp there. They belonged to Madame Coulancourt, she played so beautifully; but I was only a child in those days. But Mademoiselle Plessis plays the piano; they will be here in a few days, and then it will not be so lonely for you."

"I shall not be lonely," replied our hero, helping Rose to unlock the door of the grand saloon, "if you will pay me a visit daily. Your pretty face will drive away all my gloomy thoughts."

Rose blushed, but laughing, said—

"You will have Mademoiselle Julia to chat with. She is so pretty and lively, that you cannot be dull where she is."

"Did you hear anything at Havre yesterday, Rose," questioned our hero, as they opened the shutters to admit the light, which before only entered from loopholes left in the shutters, "anything about the English prisoners taken on board the Vengeance, I mean?"

"Yes, monsieur; my sister told me they had been marched

to Rouen, and that the Commander and the young officer with him were to be sent to Paris."

"To Paris!" repeated Lieutenant Thornton, in a tone of regret; "I am sorry for that. I fear they will endure a long captivity."

Our hero now looked round the noble saloon, full sixty feet in length, and hung round with pictures in antique frames.

"That is, I suppose, the late Duke de Coulancourt?" he inquired, looking at a half-length portrait, suspended over the lofty white marble chimney-piece.

"Yes, monsieur, that is his picture; he was a young man when that was taken, in the Royal Guards of Louis XVI. There, on the wall opposite, is his grandfather, who commanded the famous Musketeers. I will go now, monsieur, because your letter must be enclosed, and sent from Havre before night."

"I am giving you and all your family a great deal of trouble, and they and you may incur some risk from protecting me and my comrade."

"Not at all, monsieur; especially as Captain Gaudet has got plenty of employment. He is going to repair the Vengeance, and he thinks of nothing else. He fancies also that you and your man were either drowned or burned in the vessel; for my brother, who was with my mother this morning, says he does not seem to trouble about anything but the repairs of the craft."

After the departure of Rose, Lieutenant Thornton spent some time in examining the pictures and the saloon itself, which was finished in the costly but heavy style of the preceding century. The late duke's portrait was that of a remarkably handsome man of some five-and-twenty years, but there was an expression of great melancholy over the features, which our hero judged was habitual to them and not the fault of the artist, for the portrait was beautifully and artistically painted. He took a survey of every article in the saloon, which, however, created a painful sensation, as they recalled those that were gone, and the melancholy fate of those whom neither rank, wealth, virtue, nor position, could save from the doom of the criminal.

Several days passed over, somewhat tedious, it is true, to our hero, though he chatted for an hour or two daily with pretty Rose Moret, who did all she could to please her handsome and rather dangerous guest. She showed him the gardens, gathered him the choicest flowers for his chamber, and told him all the news. William Thornton was grateful, kind, and attentive to his engaging companion, and his heart and principles were too good and upright to take any undue advantage of Rose's innocence and naïveté.

Bill Saunders smoked, and cooked, and feasted, and made love to Rose's sister when she came. And she appeared to enjoy Bill's method of learning French, for many a cheerful laugh did our hero hear from below, and an incessant clatter of tongues; how they understood one another he could not say, but they seemed remarkably pleasant together.

At length, on the tenth day, Dame Moret made her appearance, with a letter and a huge bundle of garments.

"A letter from madame at last, monsieur. I have had one also, and here is a bundle of clothes made as if for my son, who is a tall man like yourself. In these garments you may walk about the country and fish to amuse yourself, for madame says you must not on any account think of escaping till you see Monsieur Plessis, who will bring a passport all ready for your use to travel into Flanders. But what an old gossip I am; you are dying to read your letter, which will of course tell you a great deal more, and better than I can."

"You are as kind to me as if I were one of your own family; and, believe me, I shall never forget in after years, if I am spared, Dame Moret and her kind daughters."

"You are a brave, handsome garçon, and God will restore you to your own country. And perhaps some of these days you may marry Mademoiselle Mabel; and if there is peace soon, I may live to see you both, and my dear mistress in this old château."

The young man felt his cheeks flush, for the dame's words struck a chord in his heart. Might he ever feel sufficient love for Mabel Arden to make her his wife, provided her feelings for him were reciprocal? was a question he had often asked himself. He, however, replied—

"She will not probably remember me when we meet again. She was very little more than thirteen when last I saw her; indeed, I was not more than seventeen myself. I doubt if we should recognise each other."

"I do not think so," said the dame, thoughtfully; "she may have changed considerably, for a young girl springing into womanhood does change much; but you, I should say, have altered but little in features; you have gained height and strength, it may be; but she would know you, I feel satisfied, for Mademoiselle Mabel was no common child, even when only six years old. The memory of early years will cling to her as the ivy to the oak. But excuse me, monsieur, I will leave you to read your letter."

Lieutenant Thornton was very thoughtful as he broke the seal of Madame Coulaucourt's letter. We shall merely touch upon certain points that deeply interested and strongly affected himself. The part that he felt most keenly was Madame

Coulancourt's explanation having reference to the death of her beloved brother, Sir Oscar de Bracy, whom she felt quite satisfied was his father. For a time he could scarcely proceed. This intelligence, though he had not the happiness of remembering his parents, made him feel acutely this cruel disappointment, for he had hoped that he would have lived to reach England, and acknowledge him as his son. It was some balm to his grieved heart to learn that Sir Oscar had received Mr. Stanmore's letters, and fully acknowledged him and his niece Mabel in his will, and before witnesses. Madame Coulancourt begged him not to grieve over the loss of the papers in the casket, as she was fully confident of being able, through the agency of Monsieur Jean Plessis, to obtain duplicates of them, which would do equally as well. She also stated that she had every reason to hope that her son Julian had not perished at the time of his separation from her at Lyons, but was, with many others, forced to serve the Republic, in either the army or the navy, and that she was exerting herself to trace him. She also entreated him not to attempt an escape from the country till he had seen Jean Plessis, who, with his wife and daughter, and a young friend, were, in a week or so, to leave Paris for Coulancourt. There was a slight rumour of peace with Great Britain, which she ardently prayed for, as she longed to return to her native land. The intelligence she was able to give him was told her by a Madame de Fenuille, a great friend of Madame Volney's, who had lately returned to France from England, via Hamburgh. She also sincerely congratulated him upon the singular discovery of his birth, and consequent connection with her by ties of blood, and this unexpected discovery accounted for the affection she had so unaccountably felt for him from the very first and only interview they ever had. She was at the time struck with his features, which seemed to recall the long past, though she could not, so troubled as she then was, tax her memory; but now she felt satisfied it was his resemblance to a beloved brother.

Our hero read the kind and affectionate letter of his aunt with deep emotion; it contained much besides, bearing proof the writer was depressed at the death of a brother she had fondly hoped to have seen once more.

That night the young sailor slept but little. He felt deeply grieved at his father's death; for, like Madame Coulancourt, he had looked forward to Sir Oscar's return to Europe, and that any mystery yet attached to his birth would be cleared up; he was of course not acquainted with the ample details in Sir Oscar's will and papers, all of which Mr. Stanmore possessed, and which awaited his return to England.

Besides having his thoughts bent upon the loss he had thus

incurred, with a very serious feeling, they also rested upon Mabel Arden. Hitherto he had only remembered her as an endearing child—as a sister. She was now, he was assured, a fair and beautiful girl; would she be so changed by the lapse of five years, as to baffle his memory of her features? Then it occurred to him that, from untoward circumstances, years might elapse before his foot would again rest on England's soil.

CHAPTER XXI.

"BILL," said Lieutenant Thornton, one morning after breakfast, as, habited in a very unpretending shooting-dress of dark green cloth, which fitted him well, "Bill, did you ever go out trout-fishing?"

"Trout-fishing, sir," repeated Bill, who was also equipped in a somewhat similar dress, and whose whiskers and moustachios had grown into formidable dimensions; "no, sir, I can't say as how I ever seed a trout. I've speared and harpooned many a shark; if he's anything like one of them ere beggars, I'm blowed, your honour, but we'll have some fun with him."

"Well, I confess, Bill, a trout is not exactly a shark; but there's some sport in catching him, and he makes a capital fry; so strap that basket on you," taking down, as he spoke, a trout rod, several of which were suspended on hooks, in a chamber devoted to articles for the chase, and various other amusements that men call sport. "At all events, Bill," continued our hero, preparing to sally forth, "if we catch no fish, we shall have air and exercise, and that's something. If we meet any one, do not speak a word; and, above all things, leave off kissing the girls; it's a bad habit."

Bill rubbed his left ear, with a very comical expression of countenance, and turned a very doubtful look at his master.

"Your honour can parley vous with the women," said Bill, "but, lord, sir, I'm high and dry, brought up on a sand-bank; but, howsomever, I will do my best, and steer clear; hope your honour will give 'em a wide berth also, seeing that they are a kind of craft that loves hugging; which is somewhat dangerous, when the wind's right on the shore."

"I will set you a good example, Bill, depend upon it; for if we expect to get out of this country, we must make sail without a craft in tow."

Bill smiled, and commenced practising silence, though his thoughts were busy.

Leaving the château by the back entrance, and locking the

door after them, they proceeded to find their way to the trout stream they could see in the distance from the upper windows of the château, winding through the fields and vineyards about half a mile from the house. It was very picturesque scenery surrounding the Château de Coulancourt; a bend of the river Seine, of a noble breadth, came within less than a mile of the mansion, and a splendid trout stream emptied itself into its broader waters. The country was also well timbered, and here and there were scattered several well-kept farms, considering the neglected way in which farming in general was attended to in France; the culture of the vine being a principal feature in all farms in that vicinity. The vine was as yet scarcely showing symptoms of vegetation; not that French vineyards in general are an object of either interest or beauty, the grape only growing to the height of four feet, and trained to a single stick.

The Englishmen confined their rambles the first day merely to the trout stream, which was a remarkably picturesque one, and about five miles from the château, sometimes tumbling in rapid runs, at other times gliding along under steep banks overgrown with flowering plants, and wild cactus. Our hero was not a practised trout deceiver, but he could throw a fly sufficiently well to coax a middling-sized fish to make a fool of himself, to Bill's surprise, who had watched his master's proceedings with considerable amazement, having never seen a trout fly in his life, and had an idea in his head that his master must be a little cracked on the subject of catching fish, if he expected to entrap one with such a rum concern as an artificial fly seemed to him. To his astonishment, however, the Lieutenant sung out—

"Now, Bill, I have him; make haste with the landing net, he's over three pound weight."

"My eyes, where is he, sir?" exclaimed Bill, seeing the rod bent double, and no signs of a fish.

"I am playing him a bit, Bill; he's rather lively yet."

"Lord love your honour! Heave him out, I'll take the liveliness out of him."

As he uttered the words, there was the report of a pistol and the prolonged scream of a female voice, which appeared to come out from a thicket near them, and through which they had observed ran a carriage road.

Dropping his rod, regardless of the trout, who was, no doubt, exceedingly obliged, our hero ran towards the wood, followed by Bill with the landing net in his hand, wondering what sort of fish his master was now going to catch.

Leaping a stile, that delayed Bill a minute to get over, Lieutenant Thornton reached the main road after a run of three minutes, and soon beheld the cause of the pistol-shot and the

shriek of the female. In the road stood a travelling Berlin, with one horse still attached, the other lying dead entangled in its harness. Two men in very peculiar costumes were struggling to hold a tall, strong man, another clutched a young female by the arm, preventing her flight, whilst two others were deliberately rifling the carriage.

Such a proceeding in broad daylight, and in, as he thought, a peaceable country, naturally astounded our hero, who, nevertheless, drew his *couteau de chasse*, without which no gentleman stirred abroad in those days, and made a spring at the powerful-looking ruffian dragging back the young female. The man with a curse drew a pistol, and fired full in William Thornton's face; and as he did so a scream of agony escaped the young girl's lips, but the ball only knocked off the Lieutenant's hat, and the next instant his knife passed through the villain with such force that the hilt striking against his chest drove him to the ground, quite dead; he was dragging the fainting female down with him, but our hero caught her round the waist, and held her up.

Short as was his glance of her pale face, he saw that she was young and singularly beautiful; he had no time to see more, for the second man, with a fearful execration, rushed upon the Lieutenant with a drawn knife of formidable dimensions, but Bill Saunders, who had by this time arrived on the scene of action, with only his landing-net for a weapon, just as the ruffian was about to strike at his commander with his knife, popped the net over his head, giving it such a powerful pull back that he half-strangled the man by tightening the iron rim against his throat, bringing him to the ground.

"Blow me," chuckled Bill, "if here aint a fish of another sort! How are you, my hearty, after that?" administering, as he spoke, a kick that turned the man over on his face.

In the meantime the stranger, struggling with the two other ruffians, who were startled by the sudden onset of the Englishman and his companion, got free, and instantly pulling a pistol from his breast, shot the nearest to him; whilst our hero, having laid the female, who had fainted, on the bank, rushed up to assist the stranger, another female in the carriage shrieking out that the robbers would murder her father.

Two of the men lying dead, one disabled, and held in Bill's grasp like a vice, so terrified the other two that they took to their heels, plunging into the wood, and getting lost in its intricacies.

The stranger ran at once to the bank, where the female our hero had rescued lay prostrate, and raising her tenderly in his arms, called out—

"Julia, Julia, make haste, and come here."

Our hero was turning to assist, when a young girl leaped from the voiture, and ran eagerly towards the stranger, casting a look at Lieutenant Thornton as she passed, of great curiosity. She was very pale, and very frightened; but our hero could perceive she was a remarkably pretty girl, but very different in manners and appearance from her companion.

"This must be the intendant, Jean Plessis," thought our hero, "though I do not remember him." Turning to Bill, who was still grasping his captive, and giving him an angry shake now and then, he said—"Let him go, Bill, as if accidentally. It will not do in our situation to have to confront the authorities against this fellow. The other two are dead. Just slacken your hold, and come with me. I see the rascally postillion coming along the road with several persons following. I dare say he ran away."

The stranger having restored the young lady to consciousness, for she had fainted, now came towards our hero, and, holding out his hand, said, in an agitated voice—

"I feel certain we owe our preservation to Monsieur Thornton; you do not, I fear, remember me. I am Jean Plessis."

Our hero shook the hand held out to him warmly, saying—

"I guessed as much, Monsieur Plessis, and now that I hear the tone of your voice, my recollection returns; but how came you to recognise me?"

"Oh, monsieur, only because I knew you were at the château, and hearing you speak, satisfied me you were Lieutenant Thornton. It was most providential that you were on the spot, otherwise those ruffians would have grossly ill-used my daughter and Mademoiselle de Tourville, and plundered us of everything. Ah, you were right," he added, in a low voice, looking round; "I see your man has let the ruffian he held steal away. No doubt you ordered him to do so."

"I did," returned our hero; "I thought he would be a useless incumbrance to us."

"You are quite right; but one word more for the present, for I see several people of the vicinity coming across the fields. Recollect you must take the name of Tourville—Philip de Tourville—brother to this young lady under my care. We shall have more time to talk of this when we get to the château; but let me introduce you to Mademoiselle Tourville; she is a young lady of good family, but, unfortunately, a sufferer during the terrible Reign of Terror."

Both the females were standing at some little distance, leaning on each other, and conversing in a low voice. As Jean Plessis and our hero approached, they turned round, and Lieutenant Thornton could perceive that the taller of the two,

a graceful and very lovely girl, trembled exceedingly and was as pale as death.

"Mademoiselle de Tourville," said Jean Plessis, "to this gallant gentleman we owe our rescue; this is Monsieur Thornton, that for a time takes your name, and will pass as your brother; and this is my daughter, monsieur," motioning with his hand to the other young lady, who appeared infinitely more self-possessed, and, as our hero thought, much less frightened.

"I will go and speak to those men coming up," continued Jean Plessis, "and prevent them addressing your man, and will send for another horse to take us to the château;" so saying he left the lieutenant with the two maidens.

Our hero, though exceedingly puzzled, and, indeed, somewhat bewildered by the whole affair, but particularly by his having to take the name of Tourville, and to pass for the brother of the beautiful girl who stood before him, advanced, and looking Mademoiselle de Tourville in the face, said—

"You are still, I fear, mademoiselle, much frightened; I wish I had been so fortunate as to have been nearer, I might have prevented those rascals altogether from frightening and insulting you."

Mademoiselle de Tourville made an attempt to reply, but the words died away on her lips, and with difficulty she kept from giving way to tears.

Seeing the distress of her companion, Mademoiselle Plessis at once said—

"I am sure, monsieur, we are deeply grateful for the assistance you so very opportunely rendered us. My friend was terrified perhaps more than she otherwise would have been by the man who held her, firing a pistol full in your face."

"That was certainly the case," added Mademoiselle de Tourville, in a trembling voice, and her eyes resting for an instant on the Lieutenant's features. It was but for a second, yet the look of those full, dark, and wonderfully expressive eyes, created a strange and undefined feeling in our hero's breast. He bowed, and replied, he felt proud of her interest in his safety, and hoped in a very short time she would feel quite restored; and then added, with a smile—

"According to Monsieur Plessis, I am to sustain the part of a brother, so that I only acted, as if by intuition, the character I was to perform. But who were those villains? were they mere robbers?"

"We cannot tell, monsieur," said Mademoiselle Plessis. "We never heard of robbers in these parts. We came down the Seine from Arlet to Rouen, and then my father, having to visit one or two farms on the way, hired this berlin to take us to the château, and to show the country to my friend. My mother

and our female domestics went on in the barge to Havre, and I dare say are at the château by this time."

Jean Plessis here joined them, saying—

"You had better, young ladies, walk on with monsieur a little way. I will overtake you with the voiture. I shall have a horse here in a few minutes. I must have the two villains, who have suffered the penalty of their crime, carried to the village and buried."

Mademoiselle de Tourville shuddered, but Lieutenant Thornton said—

"Were they robbers, Monsieur Plessis?"

"Not common robbers, certainly," returned the intendant, "for I am told there are none in these parts; but we shall hear more about them by-and-by."

The two young girls then walked gently on, our hero keeping by the side of Mademoiselle Tourville.

"You selected a very pleasant mode of travelling, ladies," remarked our hero, breaking the silence; "I have heard that the windings of the Seine, and the banks of the country on each side are extremely beautiful."

"We enjoyed the sailing part of our journey very much," replied the daughter of the Intendant, "but we did not travel all the way from Paris by water; Madame Coulancourt's carriage took us to Morlins, and thence we travelled to Rouen."

"I trust you left Madame Coulancourt quite well," said the Lieutenant.

"Thank you; quite well," returned Mademoiselle Tourville, with a voice less agitated; and looking up, the extreme paleness of her countenance passing off, a slight tinge of returning colour was visible on her cheek. "We have letters and a parcel for you, Monsieur Thornton."

"You forget," said the Lieutenant—struck by the tone of her voice, and the different accent in which she spoke the French language from her friend—"you forget I must accustom myself to the name of Tourville, and that I am your brother. May I ask, have you a brother?"

"I hope so," returned the young girl, with a good deal of emotion; "but I can only say I trust Providence has preserved him. The terrible Revolution separated us, and since then we have had no certain information concerning him."

"Such has been the lot of many a brother and sister, mademoiselle," said the Lieutenant. "Madame Coulancourt must have told you that she lost a beloved son, and was forced to separate, also, from a daughter she dearly loved."

"We heard of that event," returned Mademoiselle de Tourville, and, in a voice tremulous with emotion, and letting her eyes, in which there were tears, rest upon the ground—"and

how you, monsieur, though merely a youth, bravely protected madame's little girl, and took her safely to England."

"What is it," said our hero, communing with his own thoughts, "that so strangely stirs up recollections of the past, and makes me feel so agitated when I hear the sound of this girl's voice, and gaze into her beautiful eyes? Mabel was but a child, and yet those large eyes of hers spoke to the heart even then."

"You seem very thoughtful, Monsieur de Tourville," said Mademoiselle Plessis, with a curious smile upon her short, pretty lip. "Are you thinking of Madame de Coulaucourt's beautiful daughter, for a letter was read to us from a Madame Volney, which stated that Mademoiselle Mabel, from being only a 'pale, thin, interesting child, had grown into a lovely young woman?'"

The young man started, and flushed in the cheek. "Pale, thin, interesting child!" Those were his own words! He looked at Mademoiselle Plessis, but she was quite demure; and her friend was gazing at the road. The sound of carriage-wheels caused them to turn round, and then they beheld the berlin coming towards them, to which two horses were harnessed.

"Ah! there is our voiture, and our cowardly postillion," said Mademoiselle Plessis; "I do hate a coward: the handsomest man in the world would be contemptible in my eyes if he showed the white feather. But it is pardonable in our sex," she added, with a gay laugh; "is it not, Monsieur de Tourville?"

"It becomes an attraction," said the Lieutenant, gaily; "it ensures our sex the attention which we might not otherwise be favoured with."

"You do us wrong there, monsieur," said Mademoiselle de Tourville, in a low voice.

The carriage stopped beside them, and Monsieur Plessis jumped out.

Lieutenant Thornton assisted the two girls into the vehicle, and then, when Monsieur Plessis wished him to get in, he declined, saying he would walk, as Bill Saunders was with him, and he wished to go back for the fishing-rod he had left on the side of the stream.

Monsieur Plessis considered a moment, and then replied—

"You are right; so farewell, monsieur, for an hour or two."

As the Lieutenant was closing the door, his eyes met those of Mademoiselle de Tourville, who observed, with no little agitation—

"Indeed, monsieur, you incur a risk: suppose those horrid men still lurk in the wood!"

"There is no fear of that," said Jean Plessis; "the peasantry are roused, and these villains will either be taken or get out of the country as fast as they can."

CHAPTER XXII.

Our hero, followed by Bill Saunders—who was extremely puzzled to understand what had recently taken place, and turning over in his own mind what might be the consequence of living in the château with such lots of handsome girls, who seemed to him to be increasing daily—proceeded to the place where he had thrown down his rod. Bill in vain tried to edge in a word; his master was not to be roused from his train of reflections.

"Is this love at first sight?" asked our hero of himself; "for never did I feel the same strange and unaccountable sensation for a beautiful girl before. I have been in love a dozen times, or, at least, fancied I was; but this is a very different feeling. I used to laugh at the idea of the most beautiful face in the world causing any other sensation at first sight than that of anything else very lovely. No, it will not do to fall in love with a French girl, in my position; and its very clear, if I do not make my escape, I shall do so."

"My eyes, sir! where's the rod?" exclaimed Bill, having arrived at the precise spot.

Lieutenant Thornton looked about him; there was no rod to be seen, nor fishing-basket; but, as they looked along the river, some three hundred yards farther down, they perceived a man fishing, and towards him our hero walked, telling Bill to keep at a little distance. As he advanced, the person fishing looked up, and at once came towards him. Lieutenant Thornton could see he was a tall young man, in a dress very similar to his own, and he could also perceive that he carried his missing rod in his hand, and the basket at his back.

"Humph!" muttered our hero; "free and easy, at all events." But as the young man—evidently a gentleman, and a handsome one to boot—came up, he said, with a polite bow, and a smile—

"I hope, monsieur, you will not think I am taking a liberty with your rod and basket, for I suppose they are yours?"

"I certainly left them on the bank of the stream, monsieur," said our hero. "I had just hooked a trout."

"Ah!" interrupted the stranger, "here he is, and a very fine fish, nearly three pounds weight. I had some trouble with him, I assure you; he had run out all your line, and then lay still under the bank, but I secured him with five others, which you will find in your basket."

Now, though the stranger spoke politely, and was a handsome, gentlemanly man of some two or three and thirty years, yet Lieutenant Thornton did not like either the expression of his features, or the keen and inquiring glance he cast over his face and person.

"I am obliged to you for your care of my rod," said the Lieutenant, "which I abandoned heedlessly; but I cannot think of depriving you of the proceeds of your skill; therefore, I pray you keep the fish."

"Oh! not at all," said the stranger, with a smile; "I can have as many as I like, or require: this part of the stream on both sides for some distance is on my property, and I preserve it."

The colour came into Lieutenant Thornton's cheek as the stranger spoke these words, and he at once said—

"I fear I have unconsciously committed a trespass."

"Not at all, monsieur! not at all! You are, I perceive, quite a stranger to this part of the world; by your accent I should have taken you for an Italian. My name is Gramont; may I have the pleasure of knowing yours? My residence is within half a league, and I shall be most happy, if you are staying in this neighbourhood, to show you better fishing than this stream affords."

"You are very kind," returned our hero, wishing the trout had swallowed the rod, or that he had not come back to look for it. "My name is De Tourville; I am staying for a few days at Coulancourt, with Monsieur de Plessis."

"Ah! indeed; De Tourville," he repeated. "So, after all, you are French; pardon me for my doubts; I will not detain you, but repeat my wish to form an agreeable acquaintance during your stay; will do myself the pleasure of calling at Coulancourt;" and, with a polite bow saying adieu, and depositing the fishing-basket, the stranger sauntered slowly down the stream.

"Now this is anything but pleasant," thought our hero, raising the basket, containing six fine trout, each over nine pounds weight. "I wish, Monsieur Gramont, you had happened to be a dozen leagues from this. Very odd he did not hear of or speak of the attempt to rob Monsieur Plessis; he must have heard the firing, or seen the peasantry hurrying to the scene of action; it's very odd."

Giving the surprised Bill the basket of trout, which he exa-

mined with a curious eye, wondering very much what such a fine looking fish could possibly want with a little fly, and a fly that in his mind resembled no fly that ever flew, Lieutenant Thornton retraced his steps to the château. It was near sunset as he entered the lawn, and walked up towards the house. Monsieur de Plessis came out from the front door to meet him.

"I hope the young ladies have quite recovered their fright?" said Lieutenant Thornton, for the first time taking a steady survey of Jean Plessis' features and person, whom he would not have remembered. He appeared stouter, and wore moustaches, which he did not when first they had met in Toulon. In answer to Lieutenant Thornton's inquiry, he said they had quite recovered their spirits; that Madame Plessis had reached the château; and that they were all expecting him.

"I was delayed," said our hero, "looking for my rod, which I afterwards found in the hands of a gentleman who, it seems, is the proprietor of the land on both banks of the river in which I was fishing; he called himself Gramont."

"Mon Dieu! that is unfortunate," said Jean Plessis, with a start, and a look of uneasiness. "Did he seem annoyed at your being on his land? I had no idea he was in this part of the country. I thought he was with his regiment on the frontiers!"

"Then, you know him, Monsieur Plessis?" asked the Lieutenant.

"No, I cannot say I know him; I have seen him; but I knew his father, who was a terrible and cruel follower of Robespierre. The strange part of the affair is, that his father held possession of Coulancourt and the estates, till forced to give them up after the trial of madame, when Robespierre lost his head by the axe of the guillotine. Monsieur Gramont fled, and saved his life for a short time. His son, Eugene Gramont, then held a commission in the chasseurs, and after his father's death managed, through great interest with those in power, to retain the family estate which adjoins Coulancourt; his château is not a mile from the place where you were fishing. I shall conclude for the present by telling you that Captain Eugene Gramont bears a very indifferent character in Paris; he is known as a gambler, and a duellist, and a notorious deceiver amongst the weaker sex. However, with the Parisian ladies he is, I have heard, a favourite, and considered a remarkably handsome man; and, as he is supposed to be in the receipt of forty thousand francs yearly, he is pronounced rather an advantageous party; but I strongly suspect that not only is he himself involved, but his estate also. Now, if he should come here to visit you, it will not do to avoid him altogether."

"But," remarked Lieutenant Thornton, "do you not think the sooner I make an attempt to get out of the country the

better? I was going to ask you why I take the name of De Tourville, though it turned out fortunate your telling me I was to do so, for when Monsieur Gramont requested my name I was prepared."

"Some name," said Jean Plessis, "it was requisite you should take; and as Mademoiselle de Tourville was coming here on a visit, and will afterwards be proceeding to England through Flanders, I thought it a most excellent opportunity for you to pass as her brother, and that you could travel together into Flanders and afford her your protection."

The young man started; an emotion of pleasure he secretly felt sent a glow to his cheek, as he replied—

"Do you not think, Monsieur Plessis, that I am rather young for the guardian of a young and very lovely girl, such as Mademoiselle de Tourville?"

Jean Plessis looked into the handsome, animated face of the Lieutenant with a smile.

"You are afraid, then, monsieur, of your heart. She is, I confess, a most lovely and fascinating young lady; however, I will relieve your uneasiness on that head; a widow lady will also accompany her. But here we are at the house. I pray you have patience for a day or two, and I will explain everything, no doubt to your satisfaction. I have ordered other apartments for you, and in them you will find a trunk full of all the requisites for a change of garments. I had them made in Paris, judging your size by my own; you promised when a youth to be a tall man."

"You are very considerate and kind," said Lieutenant Thornton, surprised, but determined in his own mind to let things take their own course, and no longer to persist in thwarting the kind and generous efforts of his friends to serve him.

The next three or four days passed with our hero like magic. Monsieur Plessis was backwards and forwards at Havre, investigating the affair of the brigands. Madame Plessis he found an extremely agreeable, amiable woman, not more than six-and-thirty. With the two young ladies all restraint had vanished; Mademoiselle Julia was a lively and charming girl, with an abundance of agreeable chatter of Parisian life. She played the piano well, and sang all the newest Parisian opera airs, declaring at the same time that she was making the most of herself, and that as soon as he heard Mademoiselle de Tourville play and sing it would be all up with her. As yet Marie de Tourville had resisted all attempts to induce her to either touch the piano or harp; there was a singular timidity in her manner, a degree of agitation very evident to our hero, but unaccountable, when speaking or conversing with him.

However, when she addressed him, her voice was soft and

even affectionate, though there was less of freedom in her manner than in Julia's.

The fourth or fifth day this restraint began to wear off. She received letters from Paris, her manner altered visibly, and her spirits seemed changed. She ventured to meet the dark eyes of our hero, and one evening he induced her to seat herself at the harp, and favour him with an Italian caconetta.

Though her voice trembled a little at the commencement, it gradually gained power and depth, and its rich, full tones thrilled through the hearer's heart. When concluded, Lieutenant Thornton sat actually enthralled, so powerfully had the tones of her voice awakened some dream of the past.

"Ah!" exclaimed Julia Plessis, "I told you, monsieur, how it would be; adieu to my performance. But I can bear it, for in truth, Marie, you have a marvellous flexibility, and a wonderful modulation of tone."

"You so completely fascinated me, mademoiselle," said Lieutenant Thornton, "that I was unable at once to express my delight and thank you; if there is any one accomplishment above all others that a female can possess to perfection, I love that of singing. It has always had a strange charm over me. I do think that even in the fiercest strife it would disarm me."

"Well, that is strange," said Madame Plessis, looking up from a piece of fancy work she was amusing herself with. "I knew a lady that became so powerfully affected by music when well and skilfully played, and the human voice added, that she invariably fainted."

"Then I should think, mamma," said Julia, laughing, "that she carefully shunned such sirens as Mademoiselle de Tourville."

"No, indeed," returned the mother, "music had such a fascination, that she eagerly sought the society of those who excelled in that accomplishment."

"Which proved," said our hero, with a smile, "that the pleasure exceeded the pain."

Monsieur Plessis, as he sat with his new friend late that evening enjoying a glass of his favourite Burgundy, said—

"Do you know that that affair of the brigands is rather a strange one?"

"How so? have you not discovered where they came from, or where the rest of the rascals fled to?"

"No; in truth, the two dead men no one could recognise. Their attire was the same as the great band of fugitive Chouans that, driven out of Brittany two years ago, were massacred wherever they could be found by the Blues—as the Republican soldiers were then styled; pursued across the Seine above Honfleur, they dispersed themselves through Normandy, committing various depredations, but were supposed to have been finally

exterminated. There has been a general hunt after the rest of those brigands, but no trace of them is to be found."

"Curious enough, in such a well-populated district as this," said the Lieutenant. "However, as you escaped being plundered, it matters but little."

"Yes, as it turned out," said Jean Plessis. "The loss of the money would have been of no great moment; but I had very valuable papers relative to this estate of Coulancourt, and what is even of more consequence, Madame de Coulancourt, after some difficulty, a great deal of expense, and nearly two years' delay, has procured certificates of her marriage with Monsieur Granby Arden, and also those of the birth, &c. &c., of her two children, Julian and Mabel; similar papers were lost, as you know, in the casket. By-the-by, that robbery of the contents of the casket was a most strange affair. When Madame de Coulancourt communicated it to me, I set out for Toulon, for I felt satisfied that the robbery was committed on board the ship you stayed so many hours in the night you had the care of Mademoiselle Arden. By patient and diligent inquiries and bribery, I found out that the two galley-slaves on board the vessel at that time were both remarkable men, who afterwards figured in the bloody scenes of the Reign of Terror. One perished under the axe of the guillotine, the other—the one I strongly suspect of committing the robbery—I cannot trace. With the fall of Robespierre he disappeared, and has not been heard of since. This man's name was Vadier—Augustine Vadier; he was, before the Revolution broke out, a jeweller of great repute, in the Rue St. Pancras. He was famous for his skill in imitating precious stones of all kinds, and was a bad and dissipated man. It was discovered that some ladies of the court, who had sent their jewels to be re-set, were defrauded of the real gems and false ones substituted. Other frauds came out; he had false keys, could open cabinets and extract the contents in a most dexterous manner; and at last was brought to trial for stabbing one of his workmen, who threatened to betray him, and condemned to the galleys for life. He was sent to Toulon. When the galley-slaves got loose at the taking of that port by the English, this man made himself notorious after the evacuation, by his blood-thirsty revenge upon all aristocrats; got himself into favour with the infamous Feron and the younger Robespierre, rose into power under the elder, and then on his fall, as I before said, disappeared. This man, I suspect, was the robber of your treasure, for he was known to possess a large sum of money immediately after regaining his emancipation; he and the rest of the liberated slaves committed horrid massacres and robberies."

"Very likely indeed," remarked Lieutenant Thornton; "in

fact, there is no other way of accounting for the loss of the contents of the casket. Fortunately, Madame de Coulancourt has been able to replace the papers; had she failed, the loss would have been serious. I was going to ask you, Monsieur Plessis, why Mademoiselle de Tourville leaves France and seeks a home in England? that is, if my question is not indiscreet."

"Not at all, monsieur; far from it. It is a very natural inquiry, as you will most likely be her companion on the journey. This young lady," continued Jean Plessis, "is of good family, as I before said. She is an orphan, and I do not believe she has a relative in all France besides Madame de Coulancourt."

"Then she is a connection of the late Duke de Coulancourt—as madame is an Englishwoman."

"Such is the case. Unfortunately, she is not only left without relatives or friends, but actually without fortune of any kind. She has a horror of France, from what she witnessed and suffered, and she ardently longs to reach England, where she intends to exert her great musical talents for her support."

"Good God!" exclaimed Lieutenant Thornton, looking with an expression of extreme astonishment into the face of the intendant. "Mademoiselle de Tourville, so young, so beautiful, so pure, and so amiable, thrown upon the heartless world of London!"

"Nay, nay," interrupted Monsieur Plessis, laying his hand, with a smile, upon the lieutenant's arm, "I say also, God forbid! Do not suppose for an instant, that the generous and noble-minded Madame de Coulancourt would permit such a course of life to her young and interesting relative. No, no, she will not; but it is now late; to-morrow I expect an important letter from madame, which will finally determine our future movements. When I receive the letter, you shall be made fully acquainted with everything."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE Onyx corvette was commanded by Captain Patrick O'Loughlin. Charles Pole, our hero's comrade on board the Victory, was second lieutenant, he having had the good fortune to get appointed, through the interest of his uncle, who commanded the Colossus, seventy-four, rejoicing in his heart at having the warm-hearted and gallant O'Loughlin as a commander.

"Ah! Charley, my boy!" said the commander of the corvette, "if we had only Sir Oscar with us."

O'Loughlin would insist on always speaking of our hero by his title, which was endeared to him by being that of his noble benefactor.

"Ah, my dear sir," returned the Lieutenant, "if we had, what a glorious cruise we should have!"

"Charley, my boy," said the Captain, filling his glass, and passing the bottle to the Lieutenant, for they were sitting in the cabin after dinner; "if you *sir* me when in private, I must put you under arrest for mutiny, be the powers of war I must. I can't stand it. I hate it—I'm a rank revolutionist!"

"By Jove, that's good!" laughed Charles Pole; "you a revolutionist! Why you insist every day of your life on drinking Sir Oscar de Bracy's health, and that he must always be called 'Sir Oscar.' He would kick against that himself if he were here."

"He's a trump; don't bother me about titles, they are all very well when they and the wearer fit, and he's fit to be a duke. I wish I had been on board the Diamond that unlucky day; I'd have had that cursed Vengeance out, or been blown to atoms."

"A sail to windward, sir," said a curly-haired young midshipman, popping his head into the cabin; "she appears a large ship."

Up jumped the commander and his lieutenant, and the next moment they were on deck.

They were then some five leagues off the coast of France, in a line with Ushant. It was blowing strong from the east-north-east, with a good deal of sea on. The Onyx was under single-reefed topsails, her top-gallant masts housed. It was after sunset, with every appearance of a dirty night. Captain O'Loughlin directed his glass in the direction of the strange sail, whose topsails could be seen with the naked eye. She was coming up rapidly, under double-reefed topsails, and he pronounced her to be a frigate, whether French or English he could not say, but half an hour would decide. The corvette being on an enemy's coast, and cruising for the purpose of destroying privateers or taking prizes, she was always ready for action.

The Onyx was noted for her splendid sailing qualities. She carried sixteen long nine-pounders, and two eighteen-pound carronades in the bridle ports, and two twelve-pound carronades on the quarter-deck and forecastle. Her full complement of men and boys was one hundred and forty-five; but having taken two prizes, her first lieutenant, twenty-five men, and two midshipmen were absent. Shortly after, as the stranger

came nearer, signals were hoisted, which not being answered, Captain O'Loughlin became convinced that she was an enemy, and of vastly superior force. In fact, she soon convinced them, notwithstanding the fast increasing gloom and the commencement of a fog, that she was a thirty-two gun frigate, of double the tonnage of the *Onyx*. As she came nearer, she hoisted French colours, and commenced firing her bow-chasers.

Captain O'Loughlin, though quite justified in getting out of the way of so formidable an antagonist, resolved, nevertheless, to annoy her as much as possible. Having cut away the jolly boat to make room for four stern chasers, the *Onyx* opened fire from them, as soon as the French frigate got fairly within range, whose shot was flying over them. In a few minutes the fog, which kept increasing, put an end to the combat for the time.

"We must get the weather-gage of that fellow," said Captain O'Loughlin to his only lieutenant, Charles Pole, "in case we should meet again."

Accordingly, the *Onyx* hauled her wind to the eastward. Towards seven o'clock next morning she perceived her late antagonist close on her larboard quarter; whilst the Commander, with a speaking trumpet, hailed, ordering the corvette to strike.

To this a broadside was returned, and the next moment the frigate ran her bowsprit right over the starboard bow of the corvette; but as the wind was blowing very fresh, her jib-boom broke short off, and the corvette forcing ahead, freed herself. Just then a sailor threw himself from the French ship into the rigging of the *Onyx*, and probably in the confusion would have been cut down, had he not shouted in a loud voice—

"Hold hard, my men! I am an Englishman!"

The denseness of the fog again separated the two ships, after exchanging each a broadside, by which one man was killed and three wounded on board the *Onyx*. Captain O'Loughlin altered his course, and stood away to the westward to repair and splice his rigging, which was desperately cut up.

"Where is the man who threw himself on board?" demanded Captain O'Loughlin; "bring him aft."

It was then broad daylight, though the fog still covered the whole surface of the sea. In the course he was steering, Captain O'Loughlin did not again expect to see his late antagonist, from whom he considered he had a most fortunate escape, as she appeared full of men. He was then walking the deck with Lieutenant Pole, when the seaman who had leaped on board came upon the quarter-deck attended by the quartermaster.

"This is the young man, sir," said the latter, touching his hat; "he refuses to give any explanation except to the captain of the ship."

O'Loughlin looked at the stranger. He was a tall, slight, handsome young man, of about two or three and twenty; his complexion evidently tanned by a southern climate. There was a manly, independent manner in his bearing and look as he stood calmly facing the commander of the *Onyx*.

"Well, sir," said Captain O'Loughlin, "what have you to say for yourself? Were you a prisoner on board that ship—but, first of all, what was her name?"

"The frigate *Prudente*, forty guns, and three hundred men," replied the young man.

"The deuce it was!" cried Captain O'Loughlin; "then we had a fortunate escape. Pray what were you doing on board?"

"Waiting," returned the young man, in a somewhat hasty tone, "for an opportunity to get away. Sir," he continued, advancing a step or two, and with a flush on his cheek, "my story is too long to tell you here; I am an Englishman and a gentleman; my name is Julian Arden, and—"

"What! Be the powers of war!" exclaimed O'Loughlin, springing forward, and catching the surprised young man by the hand; "Julian Arden! the lost brother of Mabel, and the son of the *Duchesse de Coulancourt*?"

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed the young man, trembling with emotion, and clasping the captain's hand with a grasp of intense feeling; "who are you, who greet my ear with names engraved upon my heart—never forgotten through years of suffering and degradation?" Julian Arden paused; his eyes were filled with tears, and his voice failed him from agitation.

Patrick O'Loughlin wrung the young man's hand, almost equally affected; but, taking him by the arm, whilst Charles Pole and the quarter-master Brown stood considerably surprised, he said—

"Come with me, Mr. Arden; you could not have stumbled upon a man who can so much relieve your mind as I can. Thank God for this strange and most unexpected meeting!"

Julian Arden felt a sensation of happiness he had not experienced for years. He followed the commander into his cabin, and then the delighted O'Loughlin—whose generous nature never felt so elated, or experienced so much pleasure, as when rendering a service to a friend—again warmly shook the young man by the hand, told him to consider himself as much at home in the little *Onyx* as himself, and summoning the steward, ordered him to place refreshments and wine on the table.

"I am so overpowered, Captain O'Loughlin, by your extreme kindness, and so bewildered by hearing so suddenly intelligence that fills my heart with rapture—for I judge, by your words and manner, that I may expect to hear that my beloved

mother and sister are both alive—whilst alas! for years I have mourned them as dead.”

“It delights me,” said O’Loughlin, “to be able to positively assure you that not only is your mother, Madame de Couland-court, alive, but she had been, when last we heard of her, restored to her estate of Coulandcourt, and was residing in Paris. Your sister, Mabel Arden, who has grown into a most lovely girl, is in England, residing with a French lady, a Madame Volney. There is, or will be, time enough for mutual explanations this evening, provided we do not again encounter the Prudente—an ugly customer for the little Onyx. I wish my consort was up with us—we should then be able to manage our friend.”

“The Prudente is a very fine craft,” said Julian Arden, “but her commander is one of the most vulgar tyrants that ever trod a deck.”

“Now, make yourself comfortable,” said the Commander, as the steward placed the breakfast equipage on the table; for the day was yet young, and neither the commander of the Onyx nor his officer had broken their fast.

“You can have a suit of Charley Pole’s garments to put on, instead of that dress. You are much of a height. Nature made me a head too tall, like my poor friend Sir Oscar de Bracy—ah! that’s the man who saved your sister Mabel, and carried her safe to England. Be the gods of war! when you hear all, you will love him as I do.”

“Sir Oscar de Bracy!” repeated Julian Arden; “why, my mother’s brother is a Sir Oscar de Bracy; surely you don’t mean him?”

“No, my dear fellow, I mean his son; however, eat your breakfast; an empty stomach is a worse enemy than a forty-gun frigate; you may beat off the one, but you must satisfy the other. Steward, call down Lieutenant Pole, or the steak will be cold.”

Lieutenant Pole and Julian Arden were soon introduced to each other; Charles Pole remembered all the circumstances of the affair at Toulon, and William Thornton’s care of little Mabel Arden, so that, in fact, Julian appeared as if he had come amongst old friends.

“Here’s the prog, Charley,” said the Captain, helping himself to a plentiful allowance of a very tempting breakfast pie—for the Onyx was capitally victualled, and had a first-rate cook. Her worthy captain, if he loved fighting, also loved good cheer, and no commander could be more beloved by his officers and crew than Patrick O’Loughlin.

Having finished breakfast, Lieutenant Pole took Julian Arden to his cabin, to rig him out in a suit of his shore-going

clothes, whilst Captain O'Loughlin proceeded on deck. The wind had lulled considerably, and the fog looked as if inclined to lift. The reefs were shaken out of the topsails, and the course of the corvette altered, standing in for the land, hoping to fall in with her consort. About mid-day the fog cleared; they could distinguish the land about five leagues off, but no sign of their late antagonist; and Captain O'Loughlin resolved to run down along the coast, and cruise off the mouth of the Seine. During the day nothing was seen worth giving chase to—a few fishing luggers, and one or two small coasters, standing in for the land. Lieutenant Pole and Julian Arden made their appearance on deck, the latter dressed in the former's garments. He was a remarkably handsome young man, slight, but well made, and very active. As they walked the quarter-deck, Captain O'Loughlin made the latter fully acquainted with all the particulars he knew respecting Madame Coulaucourt and Mabel, and of the property and title of the Ethertons falling to Captain Arden, his uncle, and then to his son Howard, and mentioned the cruel and unjust conduct of the latter towards Mabel.

"You are now, in point of fact, Sir Julian Etherton," added Captain O'Loughlin, as the narrative was brought to a conclusion.

"Yes," said the young man, his cheek flushing, as he thought of the bitter treatment and contemptuous words of Sir Howard Etherton towards his sister; "yes, and, please God, I will assert those rights; though I may, till I can communicate with my mother, find some difficulty as I am, as I now stand as nobody in the eyes of the law. Do you know, Captain O'Loughlin, I have just been wishing you could land me on the coast to the eastward of Havre; Coulaucourt is within a league of the sea. I remember every yard of the country. I may say I am almost a Frenchman, in manner, and speaking the language, having passed almost all my life in France and with Frenchmen. My mother is in Paris; and I have no doubt of being able to make my way there without any suspicion being attached to me."*

"By Jove! it is not a bad idea," said Captain O'Loughlin; "but your dress, and the want of French money. Be the powers of war! we must capture some fellow, and supply ourselves with the needful. It is possible you might pick up some intelligence of my poor friend, Sir Oscar, who, I fear, is a prisoner with Sir Sidney Smith; at all events, we will run down along the coast, and see what is to be done."

In the evening, after the watch was set, the weather fine,

* Passports were not, at the period of the French Directory, framed in the same manner as they were some years afterwards.

and the wind blowing from the land, the officers of the *Onyx* were assembled in the Captain's cabin, enjoying a social bottle of wine, having been invited by their Commander. When only Lieutenant Pole and Julian Arden were left with the Captain, the latter gave them the following account of his escape from the perils of the revolutionary bloodhounds, and his adventures afterwards:—

"I was scarcely sixteen years of age," began Julian Arden, "when the demons let loose by the revolution at Lyons seized me one morning in the saloon with my mother and sister. Mocking their cries and lamentations, they tore me forcibly away, and dragging me through the streets filled with a revolutionary rabble, who seemed to revel in the miseries of the victims driven along with myself, they consigned me to the tender mercies of Marachat, the notorious and ferocious head gaoler of the prisons of Lyons.

"There," said my brutal conductors, giving me a blow that drove me on my face with force, causing the blood to flow down my cheeks, 'there's a spawn of an aristocrat for you, Marachat; treat him tenderly, and do not make him too fat with kindness.'

"Ah! my brave garçon, be not afraid,' returned the gaoler, 'I will tell my chef de cuisine to be sparing of his lard.'

"Ordering one of the turnkeys to take charge of me, I was hurried along and thrust into a damp and dismal cell, in which were more than a hundred and fifty unfortunate wretches, half starved, scantily clothed, and many suffering from disease; robbing the guillotine, as our vile gaoler said when any died, of its just dues. I was young, not too young to think; but I will not pain you with minutely detailing my thoughts or my sufferings. This frightful cell was not more than thirty-five feet long and ten broad, and so feebly lighted from above from a slit in the wall, that until well accustomed to the place I could scarcely see. After some eight or ten days' incarceration, three of our number died, and for four days their bodies were left by those accursed wretches before they were removed. One day I was made to approach the wretch Marachat; a gaoler held a lantern till its light fell upon my features.

"Ah!' said the savage, 'I see my cook takes care you shall not grow too fat. I have to tell you that your friend, Collet d'Herbois, has taken care of your worthy mother and sister; the glorious guillotine has cut their dainty heads off!'

"I shrieked in agony, and maddened, flew at my gaoler, but, with a blow of the heavy keys he carried, he struck me bleeding to the ground. Oh, what I suffered! when a kind old man, one of the prisoners, restored me to life and sense by bathing my face with his scanty allowance of water.

“‘My poor boy! My poor boy!’ sobbed the old man, ‘just the age of my poor Philip!’

“‘Surely, surely!’ I exclaimed, ‘they could not murder a child. My loved sister was but a child!’

“‘Not murder a child!’ repeated the old man, hysterically; ‘Eh, mon Dieu! babes in the arms are butchered by those fiends Herbois and Ronsin. When they entered the city with two thousand of their blood-stained followers, did not those two wretches stand gazing with frightful exultation upon two hundred victims tied to trees, whom cannons loaded with grape tore to pieces? and when their soldiers bayoneted those that survived, they laughed madly with joy. Oh, merciful God!’ exclaimed the old man, waving his skeleton arms wildly in the air, ‘wilt thou permit such sin to triumph?’ The old man’s head sank upon his breast.

“The next day he was relieved from his misery by death. The third morning from that event half our number were led out, more dead than alive, to be shot down like dogs, and for no earthly crime. Thirty only, besides myself, remained five days afterwards, when one morning Marachat entered the cell with some turnkeys.

“‘Come, my beauties!’ said this wretch, ‘let me have a look at you all. I have cleared out my saloons, and they are getting tired of shooting and bayoneting. More’s the pity. Let me see how many more of you are fit to serve your country. Ah! my little aristocrat, have you escaped the guillotine and shooting? Lucky fellow; come, I think you will do for me, you’re young;’ and examining the rest, he selected nine. ‘Mortieu, only ten of you fit to smell powder, after all my care. Tonnerre de Dieu! I must discharge my chef de cuisine. There, garçons, take those fellows into the yard; the rest of these miserable wretches may be shot to-morrow, they are good for nothing else.’

“We were driven into a court-yard, there our arms were pinioned, and shortly afterwards we were put into a covered cart. I must have been blessed with a singularly strong constitution to have survived these trials, under which I beheld strong men die. I did live certainly, but I was greatly emaciated. Several other carts were filled with wretched-looking objects; and as soon as they had their complement they drove off, escorted by a troop of dragoons. We were taken to Brest, and were intended to supply the loss the French fleet had sustained by the guillotine. Many captains were beheaded, a rear-admiral imprisoned, and numbers of seamen declared disaffected were executed.

“After being in the hospital a fortnight, where I was tolerably well cared for, I was placed on board a guardship. There

was a kind and humane surgeon in the hospital, to whom I told my story, stating I was an Englishman by birth.

“‘Mother and father English? Keep that to yourself, my lad,’ said the surgeon; ‘as surely as you say you are English, you will be shot.’

“I found I was entered on the books as Julian Coulancourt. Brest at that time was in a state of intense excitement. The tricolour was formally adopted as the national flag, and the navy of Republican France declared cleansed and regenerated. Though told by that villain Marachat, the tool of Collet d’Herbois, that my beloved mother and sister had perished, there were at times moments when I cheered myself with the idea that they yet lived. I knew that Herbois was the fiendish persecutor of my mother, and his tool Marachat might have spoken falsely to torture me. Why I was not taken out and shot with the first group is a mystery to me. However, the very idea that they might still live enabled me to sustain the hardships I went through. Divine hope, the sheet-anchor of man, held me up against despair.

“At this time it was decreed by the National Convention that the captain or any officer of any ship-of-the-line carrying the Republican flag, who should haul down the national flag to an enemy, however superior, unless actually in danger of sinking, should be stigmatised as a traitor, and suffer death. It was my lot to be placed on board the seventy-four gun-ship Vengeance, then commanded by Noel François Renaudin, one of the bravest and at the same time kindest-hearted commanders then in the service of the Republic. I have good reason to remember him and his gallant little son, then a mere child, scarcely more than eleven years old.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“At this time the French fleet was ready for sea, and I experienced the most painful thoughts; here I was, an Englishman by birth and feelings, about to be forced to fight against my countrymen, though determined in my own mind when the moment arrived I would refuse to do so, and take the consequences. As long as my duty consisted in aiding to work the ship, or any seaman’s duty, I would do it willingly. At times I felt sanguine of being able to escape on board an English ship. Some days after leaving Brest, it was my extreme good fortune to save the life of Captain Renaudin’s son. This fine young boy was full of life and spirit; his father was a widower, who doted on him; and Alfred was his only child.

"He used frequently to play about the quarter-deck, and would manage to climb up the mizen rigging, though his father usually prevented him. One day the ship going through the water at the rate of seven knots, and a cross swell, Captain Renaudin was writing in his cabin, when the young boy came on deck, and shortly after began climbing up the mizen rigging. I was then employed doing some trifling job to the ratlines, when the boy passed me, laughing. I begged him earnestly to come back, and even called to the officer on the quarter-deck. He heard me, and looking up, beheld young Renaudin.

" 'My dear boy, come down,' exclaimed the lieutenant, 'it's naughty of you to go there. Your papa will be angry.'

"At that moment the ship rolled to port; somehow the child lost his footing, and fell; I grasped his garments, but lost my footing; and striking my feet forcibly against the rigging, we both fell into the sea. I did this to avoid touching the side, which would have killed us both. I had been a good swimmer from a very early period, so I kept the child's head up. Oh, what a brave child that was—he was all alive, and without fear, notwithstanding the terrible shock with which we came against the water, going under several feet. A scene of indescribable confusion ensued on board the ship. The father wanted to plunge into the sea, though he was incapable of swimming; but the first lieutenant held him, saying—

" 'There is no fear; that brave youth swims like a duck; the cutter is out, and will reach them in a few minutes.'

"This little dialogue, whilst the ship was hove in stays, was related to me afterwards by the first lieutenant. In a few minutes the boat was lowered and manned, and in less than ten minutes we were lifted into her. Young Renaudin put his arms round my neck, and kissing me, said—

" 'Papa will always love you, and make you rich; and I will love you dearly. I was a very naughty boy.'

"Oh, how the father pressed the child to his heart, the tears streaming down his cheeks! he shook my hand with fervour, merely saying—

" 'Go, change your clothes; I owe you my boy's life.'

"The next day I was sent for to the quarter-deck; the first lieutenant came up to me, saying I was to follow him to the captain's state-room. Alfred Renaudin, nothing the worse for his dip, rushed to me, and threw his arms round my neck, saying—

" 'Mind, papa, what you promised me, and I'll never be naughty again.'

" 'I owe you my child's life,' said Captain Renaudin, looking at me with great attention, and, I thought, some sur-

prise. 'I find you are entered on the ship's books as Julian Coulancourt—is that your name?'

"'No, Monsieur; Coulancourt is my mother's name. Mine is Julian Arden. I am an Englishman by birth.'

"'How is that?' exclaimed the Captain; 'there is but one family in France of the name of Coulancourt, and a high family it is. If your mother was a Coulancourt, how do you bear the name of Arden?'

"I explained as briefly as possible, to the great surprise of the Captain and his first officer.

"'Yours, and your unfortunate mother's and sister's fate,' said Captain Renaudin, with emotion, 'is a sad specimen of the mad acts committed by monsters, for I will not call them men. I believe every word you have told me. I regret you are of English birth, for I will not insult you by even supposing you would fight against your countrymen. My intention was to place you on the quarter-deck. Now I cannot do so; but I will remove you from your present position, till I have an opportunity of restoring you to your country. As you are entered on the ship's books, I must continue you on them, but you shall remain with my son, nominally his tutor; thus in any engagement with your countrymen, you will have nothing to reproach yourself with. To me you will always be dear, for you have saved that which is dearer to me than life.'

"From this noble, excellent man I received every kindness and attention. I was supplied with proper garments by one of the midshipmen, and allotted a berth in the Captain's cabin for young Renaudin and myself, and had all my meals at the Captain's table. Some of my old associates in the fore-castle viewed my transition from the galley to the Captain's cabin with envy and sneers; they imputed my exaltation to the simple act of saving the Captain's son; but such was not the case; had I been of low birth, and one of the crew, he would have amply rewarded me, but never have admitted me to an intercourse with himself and his officers; who, hearing my story, considered me their equal, and were exceedingly kind.

"Monsieur Renaudin was a man of high birth and refined mind. We often spoke of the horrors enacted in France during the Reign of Terror, and shuddered to think of Frenchmen having degenerated into demons. He knew my mother's husband, the Duke de Coulancourt, and had heard of my beloved parent's cruel misfortunes, but had no knowledge of her fate. He thought it too probable she and my little sister had perished under the monstrous rule of Collet d'Herbois.

"I became attached to Alfred Renaudin, and did all in my power to instruct him; fortunately, before my family became

victims to the Revolution, every pains had been taken with my education, so, though scarcely seventeen, I may, without vanity, say that I had profited by the masters I had. I will pass over a period of sixteen months, and come to the eventful morning when the French fleet, of which the *Vengeance* was one, was attacked by the British fleet under Lord Howe. Of this tremendous and glorious action, ending in victory to the English, I can only speak as it affected the *Vengeance*. I requested Captain Renaudin's permission to remain on the quarter-deck. He hesitated, saying, 'My dear young friend, you will be risking life uselessly;' but I prevailed. I need not say my heart beat quicker as I gazed out over the broad ocean, and beheld it covered with noble vessels, all preparing for a deadly strife. I counted five-and-twenty stately ships; but no doubt you know all about that memorable fight, Captain O'Loughlin, better than I can relate it to you."

"Yes," returned O'Loughlin, "but never from an eyewitness; moreover, there are some doubts thrown upon the exact cause of the foundering of the *Vengeance*. I pray you, therefore, to omit no particular that you witnessed."

Julian Arden then continued—

"I said I counted five-and-twenty stately ships, all under full canvas, for the weather was very moderate, and the sea smooth. The ships, shortly after sighting each other distinctly, reduced their canvas to single-reefed topsails. The French ships kept signalling, and presently, as they read the signals, they all drew up in line, east and west. On our starboard quarter was the *Achille*, on the other the *Patriote*, or the *Jeannapes*, at this moment I forget which; but as I gazed in breathless anxiety, the breeze rapidly freshened, and then the English ships filled, and stood right for our line, and, as it appeared to me, each ship singling out its antagonist. I do not know the name of the ship, but she was by far the largest in the British fleet——"

"That was the *Queen Charlotte*," said Captain O'Loughlin, "Lord Howe's ship of one hundred guns."

"Ah, now I remember, so it was," said Julian. "She appeared to be bearing down right upon us; but suddenly she broke off from her course, and the *Vengeance* opened fire upon her, which she did not return; but immediately setting her top-gallant sails, shot past us, and ranged up abreast of the *Achille*, who at once commenced a fierce fire upon her, and immediately after, the action became general, and to my unpractised eye, a scene of intense confusion. What with the thundering of the cannon, the flapping of the monstrous sails, as the several ships tacked or hove-to, the cheers from some of the British ships, and the thunder of the huge blocks, as the sheets and tacks, cut by the balls, allowed them to dash wildly about, knocking against

yards and masts, altogether created an astounding din. Still there was an intense excitement in the scene, that left no thought of danger to intrude itself. Thus the action continued: the *Vengeance*, most admirably handled, her captain as cool and as calm as at his dinner-table. Two of his officers were struck down by his side, and splinters were knocked about like chips, when I suddenly observed a ship—the first lieutenant told me was the *Brunswick*—steer directly between us and the *Achille*. I then heard Captain Renaudin give his orders to close; the *Vengeance* shot ahead, there no longer remained an opening, and thus the *Brunswick* ran foul of us, with a great shock. My first idea was to run up the rigging and get into the rigging of the English ship, but I should, at such a moment, no doubt have lost my life.

“In this state our yards and rigging were entangled. We bore along through the water, the men of the *Vengeance* keeping up an incessant fire of musketry, and from her thirty-six pounders, loaded with old nails, and jagged pieces of iron, a terrible fire was poured into the *Brunswick*. I had just mounted upon a large case near the flag-staff, and from thence I could see on the deck of the *Brunswick* where the shot told with terrible effect. It made my heart throb painfully. The next instant I saw the *Achille* bearing down also to the *Brunswick*, but the *Achille* had only her fore and mizen-mast standing, and a terrible and well-directed broadside from the *Brunswick* totally dismasted her. Strange to say, all this time we were locked together.

“The crew of the *Brunswick* taking advantage of the rolling of the *Vengeance*, depressed the muzzles of their guns, and fired into us most destructive broadsides, ripping and tearing our sides terribly; but the *Vengeance* kept up so incessant a fire from the tops, and from our decks, that it was utterly impossible for me to get on board the *Brunswick*. A violent squall striking both ships, they tore asunder, snapping ropes, rigging, and yards, like packthread. For nearly two hours those two great ships had been locked together, the whole time keeping up a terrible fire. It was now that we received what I may call the mortal wound that caused the *Vengeance* to founder. Attacked by the *Brunswick*, and another seventy-four-gun ship at the same time, our gallant commander exerted all his skill, assisted by the courage of his crew, to contend against these odds, but the British ships were also worked with consummate skill; a shot struck our rudder, another shot knocked a huge hole under our counter, through which the water rushed in with great violence. As I was gazing intently on the scene, a ball struck the case on which I stood, breaking it to atoms, and throwing me violently

against the starboard bulwarks, but I was quite sensible, and very little hurt. The state of the *Vengeance* was now terrible, numbers of her crew were now lying dead and dying, from the fire of three ships. I caught a glimpse of Captain Renaudin standing on a carronade vehemently cheering on his crew. Just then, as I was getting on my feet, young Alfred Renaudin rushed out of the cabin, and seeing me just rising, rushed with a cry to my side, saying—

“‘Oh! Julian, where is *mon cher* papa? Are you wounded?’

“‘No, not wounded, only a little stunned; but you must not stay here,’ seeing his gaze fixed upon the body of a man lying dead within a yard or two of us. ‘Come below.’

“‘No, no,’ cried the child, ‘I’m no coward, but I am too little to fight.’ As I was leading him to the cabin, Captain Renaudin and his first lieutenant came up, followed by two of the crew; they unfurled a flag as a signal that the *Vengeance* surrendered. Captain Renaudin looked serious, if not distressed.

“‘We are sinking fast,’ he said, as he embraced his boy. ‘*Mon Dieu*, we have lost the ship, but we have done our duty,’ and in truth they had. The *Vengeance* had fought three line-of-battle ships. The firing had ceased on board the Brunswick. She had lost her mizen-mast and all her boats; so had the *Vengeance*, all but one small one. There was great excitement on board, for all knew they were sinking.

“Into the small boat Captain Renaudin desired me to get, and take his son with me and four men, and pull on board the nearest frigate that could afford assistance to save the crew. I slid down a rope first into the boat ready to receive young Alfred, but six or seven men slung down the rope, and one with his knife cut the warp.

“‘Rascal!’ I exclaimed, ‘what did you do that for? there are neither oars nor sail in the boat,’ and she drifted away from the *Vengeance*.

“‘Hold your jaw,’ said one of the men, ‘you skulking rascal, or I’ll stick my knife in you.’ I knocked the man over the side and shouted to the *Vengeance*, but the next moment a chance shot struck the boat, and cut her nearly in two, plunging us all into the water. As I scrambled up on the bottom of the boat, I beheld the main and fore-mast of the *Vengeance* fall, carrying away the mizen, but I had scarcely gained a firm hold on the boat’s bottom, when a wild and never-to-be-forgotten cheer startled me, and attracted my attention, despite my awkward situation. I looked in the direction of the sound. The cheer came from the lion-hearted crew of the poor *Vengeance*. She was going down; one moment she surged upwards; again another cheer. A tri-colour was waved in triumph as she dis-

appeared with her living freight of brave, devoted men beneath the waves.

"I was horror-struck; I looked at those clinging to the broken boat; three were there, the others had been killed by the shot; but the savage *culotte*, who had threatened to stick me with his knife was one, and he glared at me savagely.

" 'Knock that spy and lubber off,' said he to the two men near me; 'she won't bear up us four long.' The ruffian himself edged towards me, and struck at me with his clenched fist; he had lost his knife; but I was strong and active, and not easily frightened, and in the struggle I knocked him off, and somehow he got under the boat, for we saw no more of him. The other two cursed me frightfully, but they could not swim, and they were afraid to move, as the boat was anything but a steady support. I looked around, hoping to have a chance of being picked up by some English vessel. The engagement still continued, and several shots tore up the water close beside us, and one stray ball struck the water, and then bounded right over us. At no great distance lay a French ship totally dismasted, but a shout from the two men in the boat caused me to turn round, and then I perceived a frigate, with the tri-colour flying, coming right down for us. She perceived us in time, and backing her topsails under our lee, we dropped down to her. She hailed to know who we were, and the men replied, 'We belong to the *Vengeance*.' Ropes were thrown to us, and after a struggle we were hauled upon the deck. The two rascals were no sooner on the deck of the frigate, than they accused me of drowning their comrade by striking him down, when he was trying to save himself by clinging to the shattered boat. I soon found I had got amongst a crew of regular *sans culotte*, most violent, out-and-out Republicans. The frigate was the *Volentier*, which had taken no part in the fight. She was proceeding to Brest, with the news of the result of the engagement between the two fleets. Her captain, formerly the skipper of a merchant craft, was the greatest brute I ever encountered. He ordered me, without asking a single question, to be put in irons; this was done, and I lay in my wet garments the whole of the night. To attempt to disclose my being an Englishman would have insured my condemnation. Fortunately, not one of the officers on board the *Vengeance* had betrayed my not being a Frenchman, therefore I was so far safe.

"The next day I was hauled up and brought before the Captain, who was pacing the quarter-deck half-drunk. Fortunately for me, his first lieutenant was a humane man, and a gentleman, and as I afterwards found, had served with great disgust under Captain Baudet, and was resolved, when

the frigate reached Brest, to get an exchange into another ship.

"'So,' said the Captain, stepping close to me, and staring into my face, his eyes bloodshot and his face purple with repeated potations; 'so, you young rascal, you murdered your comrade; instead of helping a drowning man, you finished him.'

"'Begging your pardon, monsieur——'

"'Sacre tonnerre! you villain, how dare you, you scum of the gaols, how dare you beg my pardon? I'll commence by giving you a couple of dozen, that will teach you to speak respectfully to your superior. Take him away, and——'

"'Stay,' said Lieutenant Veillot, calmly and quietly; and, turning to his commander—who seemed somewhat in awe of his lieutenant, and for a good reason, he could not work his ship without him, and had no more notion of bringing her into action than a school-boy—he said some few words to the captain, who looked sulky, but at length said, 'Eh, bien, you can do so.' Lieutenant Veillot then said, 'Send those two men aft belonging to the Vengeance.' The two rascals came swaggering up, and then stood eyeing me with looks of malice and triumph.

"'Now, harkee, my men,' said the Lieutenant; 'if you do not give me a true statement, and answer the questions I ask you honestly, you will pay for it, and get your backs well scratched; for I strongly suspect you are telling a lie when you say this young stripling murdered your comrade. Now answer me; what is the name of this youth?'

"'He was entered in the ship's books, Julian Coulancourt.'

"'Well, what was he—was he before the mast?'

"'Yes,' returned the men, 'he was before the mast, rated second class.'

"'Then how comes he to be attired in plain clothes and garments only worn by gentlemen? He did not dress in that manner working as a common sailor.'

"'He jumped overboard—any one of us would have done the same—to save Captain Renaudin's son; and the captain, to reward him, gave him those clothes, and kept him to attend on his son.'

"'Is this a correct statement, young man?' said the Lieutenant, turning to me.

"'Very nearly so, monsieur,' I returned. 'Captain Renaudin, finding I was connected with the Duke de Coulancourt's family——'

"'Why, curse your impudence!' burst out Captain Baudet, 'there are no dukes now; the guillotine has weeded our poor country of all those gentry. There, I have had quite enough

of this examination ; I don't care a sou whether you murdered your comrade or not—it won't bring him to life again. You were entered on the books of the Vengeance as seaman, second class ; go forward and do your duty ; and, harkee ye, if I catch you skulking, or playing the gentleman, I'll make your back a curiosity to look at. Go,' and the brute walked off.

"Lieutenant Veillot bit his lip. 'Go, my lad,' said he kindly to me ; 'do your duty, and you need not be afraid. When we get to Brest things may turn out differently ; you shall not be punished for nothing, at all events.'

"Here was a miserable prospect for me ; obliged to herd with the very worst class of seamen, the very refuse of the prisons, whereas the Vengeance, excepting in a very few cases indeed, were thorough good seamen. However, there was no help for it. I consoled myself with the reflection that, on arriving at Brest, through the kindness of the first lieutenant, I might get exchanged into another ship, or manage to get away, and trust to my thorough knowledge of French to escape detection, and get to Paris. The day before we reached Brest, in a violent squall, one of the sailors saved from the Vengeance fell from the foreyards and fractured his skull. Before he died he stated to the surgeon that his accusation against me was false ; that it was his comrade intended killing me, and that, in my defence, I struck him into the water.

"This confession did me no good with our brutal captain. He only swore he'd watch me the sharper, as I was an accursed spawn of an aristocrat. Nevertheless, it was satisfactory to me, this confession, as many of the crew of the Volentier treated me less unkindly.

"Misfortune still persecuted me. For some days the first lieutenant complained of illness, but struggled against it. The day we entered Brest he was seized with fever, and became slightly delirious, and was taken ashore to the naval hospital. Captain Baudet, with a mocking laugh, said to me the next day, as I happened to pass near him on some duty I was put to do—

"'So, you young aristocrat, you have lost your friend. Never mind, *sacre Dieu* ! I'll take care of you. You don't quit this ship ; I'll have you closely watched. I have not seen your delicate back yet, but don't despair.'

"It was with difficulty I could keep my temper, but I made no reply. I was watched with a vengeance. This low-bred ruffian seemed to have a vast delight in inflicting indignities and insults upon any one he conceived an aristocrat by birth. He thought I was one of the Coulancourt family, and the most degrading duties were given me to perform. I could have no redress. No matter how degrading the tasks, I performed them,

because I knew the wretch would inflict an indignity I could scarcely survive. However, all attempts at escape were put an end to by our being sent to the coast of Africa, with the fifty gun frigate *Experiment*, two other ships, and two brig corvettes. We sailed on an expedition against the town of Sierra Leone. Fortunately for me, our brutal and half-mad commander drank himself into a fit of *delirium tremens*, and remained confined to his cabin, under the care of the surgeon, till we arrived, after a boisterous voyage, off the coast, and shortly after the ships commenced a heavy fire upon the town, which offered no resistance whatever. The second day the British ensign was hauled down as a token of surrender; nevertheless, the two frigates kept up an incessant fire into the streets of the town, as we afterwards heard, killing and wounding many. At length it was resolved to land. I was rejoiced to hear this, for come what would, I resolved to escape, and take my chance of fortune. Our little squadron was commanded by a Monsieur Theodore Allemand. Each ship told off a certain number, and as luck would have it, I formed one from our ship. We had already lost many men by the pestiferous climate, and had many sick; amongst the sick was our captain, or I do not think I should have formed one of the landing party. Our surgeon was of opinion that the captain would not live, and the first lieutenant, who would take the command if he died, felt rather anxious that he should not; the crew would not, however, have gained much by the exchange. Everything being prepared, the men told off into the boats. We pulled in for the town, and a miserable-looking place it appeared. Before the boat's keels touched the beach the town was totally abandoned by its inhabitants; so that when we entered, the officers were not able to restrain the men, and, with a loud shout, away they went, breaking into the houses, plundering and destroying everything, even setting fire to the houses. Watching my opportunity, I dashed out through the back window of a large house, threw away my musket, and made directly for the woods. When I reached cover, regardless of reptiles or wild beasts, I threw myself into a thicket, and then fell, somewhat exhausted by the run I had had. From where I was I could see the smoke of the burning town, for they wantonly set fire to the church, the company's warehouses, and all the buildings belonging to the English residents. As I lay hid in this kind of jungle, I began to think what I should do; where had the inhabitants fled to, where procure food. It was the month of September. As I lay, perfectly still, I suddenly caught the sound of voices not very far from me. I listened, and became convinced I heard females speaking. The jungle was extremely thick and entangled. As I cautiously moved on towards the sounds, I dis-

tinctly heard a man's voice, and even distinguished the words, 'Don't be alarmed; it's nothing.' 'Ah!' said I, joyfully, 'here are some of the English inhabitants of the town, hiding.' So I sprang up, and, without hesitation, pushed my way through the bushes, and, thrusting aside a dense mass of vegetation, a man started up, presented a pistol, and fired without a word of warning.

"This was rather an uncourteous mode of salutation, but as it only knocked my hat off, and raised the skin of my head, I was well satisfied; but, thinking I might be favoured with a second, I called out, 'I am English—a fugitive from the French ships.'

"'Why the deuce didn't you say so?' said the man; 'I might have killed you.'

"I now, to my surprise, found myself face to face with the party hiding; besides the man there were two females, Europeans, and two black girls. The man was attired in a light European dress made of cotton; he advanced towards me with a drawn sword in his hand, whilst the females, two young and lovely girls, stood half-frightened, half-bewildered. The Englishman said—

"'It was very foolish, young man, for you to burst in upon us so rashly. Knowing the rascally Frenchmen were plundering and firing the town, I mistook you, as well I might, seeing your dress, for one of them. If I had mortally wounded you, and then found out my mistake, it would have made me miserable.'

"I easily perceived by his manner and tone that the stranger was decidedly a gentleman. I begged to apologise, stating that my family had suffered in France during the worst days of the revolution; that I had been imprisoned, and afterwards forced to serve on board a man-of-war, but was determined not to fight against my countrymen, and that the moment I landed with the party attacking the town, I fled.

"'Cursed set of cowardly buccaneers!' said the stranger. 'Come, I am rejoiced, since you are an Englishman, and no harm has happened, that I can give you shelter. Come here, Cherry, my girl,' turning to the two timid but really lovely girls, that stood gazing at me with surprise. One of the girls came timidly forward, and then her father, for such the stranger was, said—'Do you think we may trust this young man, and let him share our shelter? he's an Englishman, though somewhat like one of those buccaneering Frenchmen in attire.'

"The young girl blushed, saying—'Oh, yes, father, I should surely do so. What else but to seek safety could bring him here?'

“‘Thank you, miss,’ said I, ‘for your good opinion; I assure you, you shall never repent any kindness shown me. I have hitherto suffered from tyranny and oppression, but kindness I have rarely experienced.’

“‘Well, girls, he shall have my protection, though those cursed Frenchmen have knocked down our house, and left us only the canopy of heaven for a roof; besides, we must get out of this place before night, or some hungry lion may possibly intrude. So come, sit down; I do not think there is the slightest chance of the enemy penetrating further than the town, so you are safe enough. I see clearly you are, or were, in a better station of life than your dress denotes. You will have time enough to tell me all about yourself. I have an intelligent negro watching the movements of the French; when he comes back and reports that they have returned on board their ship, we will think of moving.’ So we all seated ourselves on the dried grass in heaps, gathered by the two black attendants. These two natives were far from ugly, though certainly not provided with a superfluity of garments.

“‘Now girls,’ said the stranger, ‘let us have some refreshment and wine,’ and at once a large hamper was unpacked. The stranger’s two daughters, losing their timidity, laughingly displayed their stores, and most kindly invited me to share their repast. We were in a nice cool, shady place, well protected from the sun’s rays, otherwise the heat would have been oppressive. Some roast fowls and bread, and fruit, and good wine, made an excellent repast, and, before it was finished, I had become quite friendly and familiar with the two charming sisters and their kind-hearted father. The young ladies were attired in loose cotton dresses, simply drawn in at the waist, and wore rice straw hats. Their father was a man rather above the middle size, broad-shouldered and deep-chested, with very handsome, pleasing features, dark hair and beard, and in years about forty-five. His two daughters were, as he afterwards told me, seventeen and fifteen. The eldest was a lovely girl, and so fair, I judged she could not have been long exposed to a southern sun. The negro girls were very young, with slender, fine forms, and dazzling white teeth; of their dress, the less said the better—it was the attire of the country, and no one thought anything about it.”

A summons on deck, a large ship being in sight, put an end to Julian Arden’s story for that night, and all went upon deck.

CHAPTER XXV.

ON gaining the deck, all eyes were turned in the direction of the strange ship. It was a clear, fine night, and the wind and sea moderate.

"Ah, that's a merchant ship," said Captain O'Loughlin, looking through his night-glass. "I am sure of it. What has brought her so close in with the French coast? It's a great and unnecessary risk."

The stranger was soon within hailing distance. The *Onyx* altered her course, and then ran in a parallel line with the strange vessel; she was a full-rigged ship, under top-gallant sails. The Lieutenant hailed her, demanding from whence she sailed, and where bound to. They saw at a glance she was an English ship, but she might be in the hands of a prize crew, running for some French port.

A strong, manly voice replied that the vessel was the *Flying Fish*, from Jamaica to London. She had been chased by a French frigate until close in with the French coast, where she fell in with three English ships of war. One gave chase to the Frenchman, and she continued her voyage. One of the English vessels hailed her, asking name, &c.; told her she would fall in with the *Onyx*, off Havre, and that there was little or no risk of encountering an enemy as she was then steering; the wind was too scant to keep off the land.

Captain O'Loughlin told the captain he had better get on the other tack, and make the best of his way and sight the English coast. The *Flying Fish* then put about, and after exchanging compliments, the two ships separated; as did the friends, for the night. Nothing particular occurred the following day, there being little or no wind, so the party again assembled in the cabin, and Julian Arden resumed his narrative.

"As we sat, or rather reposed on the heaps of soft grass," began Julian Arden, "after finishing our meal, the stranger told me he should like to know something about me; how I came to be mixed up in the French Revolution, and what I intended doing with myself in such a pestiferous climate as Sierra Leone. I merely told him my father was an English gentleman of the name of Arden, and that my mother, some time after his death, was, in a certain measure, forced to marry the Duke de Coulan-court; and then I briefly related how I lost my poor mother and sister, and my own sufferings in prison. I saw the tears in the eyes of the two young girls, and felt flattered by the kind commiseration of both father and daughters.

"Well, young gentleman," said the Englishman, "I think the best thing, and indeed the only thing you can do, is to get

a passage in the first ship that touches here for England ; arrived there, you will easily discover your relatives. Now I will tell you who I am, and what my intentions are, for I am not a resident here, I assure you, of my own free will. My name is Pakenham, I am colonel of the — Regiment. We were returning to England from the Cape, when we were sighted and chased by a remarkably fast privateer under the tricolour. Our ship was a new vessel, with a stout-hearted skipper, and a brave crew ; and after an action, sharp, and of long duration, we beat the fellow off ; but he so cut up our sails and rigging, and damaged our spars, that in a succession of gales, some days after, we were close driven towards the coast of Africa, and in a tremendous squall lost our foremast, and finally went ashore two leagues to the eastward of the new town. Fortunately, our ship was a strong one ; she held together for two days, and we all, captain and crew, got safely on shore. But scarcely had we secured our baggage and effects before another hurricane, from a worse point, knocked the vessel all to pieces. We proceeded to the town, and strange enough I found settled there a very old friend and brother in arms, a Captain Stanhope, who had been induced to come out here by the Sierra Leone Company. He had a wife and eight children, and hoped to support them on his half pay and the stipend allowed him by the company. He is now with his two fine boys and four girls, all that's left, up at Fort Banca, which we must endeavour to reach to-night. Our unfortunate skipper and his crew sailed in a miserably small schooner with what was saved from the wreck, about three weeks after our misfortune. I would not venture my children in her, so my friend Stanhope got me a house, and these two comely young negresses to attend on us, and I hired a negro, and here we have been waiting the arrival of some merchant ship from England, or a man-of-war, but not one has touched here since ; and now these confounded *sans culottes* have knocked down our house and driven us into the woods. The best thing you can do is to return to England with us. I will do my best to supply your wants, having luckily saved all my own effects, for the moment we perceived these French ships we all sent off our effects to Fort Banca ; of course, we could offer no resistance.'

"I returned Colonel Pakenham my most sincere thanks for his generous intentions. As the day wore on, we became anxious to know whether the French had returned to their ships. I offered to go and endeavour to discover, but one of the black attendants who was on the look out came running into our retreat, saying—

"'Massa ! Massa ! Pompey, he come !'

In a few minutes a fine able-bodied negro made his appear-

ance; he was startled at seeing me in the attire of a French sailor, but the Colonel told him it was all right, that I was an Englishman.

“‘Ah! see him berry glad, massa,’ continued Pompey. ‘De debils be all gone bord ship. De burn and carry off ebery ting, cuss ’em. De sure come again to-morrow.’

“‘Well, then, Pompey, we must set out at once for Banca, we shall find canoes on the river bank.’

“‘Certain sure, massa. Massa Stanhope ab dem ready for you.’

“‘Well, then,’ continued the Colonel, ‘pack up our traps and let us be moving, its only two miles to the river. Banca, young gentleman, is a fort or an island up the river.’

“I helped the young ladies to get all the little chattels they had brought away hastily from their house in the town, and insisted on taking my share of the burdens. The negro girls laughed and chatted as if the whole affair was a piece of amusement, and off we started. It was not so very easy to get through the entangled wood; the Colonel and Pompey led the way, whilst I assisted the daughters, cutting away the brambles and overhanging branches with an axe Pompey gave me. Having cleared the wood, we soon got over the rice grounds, and in an hour we reached the banks of the river. There we found two large canoes, with some negroes belonging to Captain Stanhope. We all embarked, and were paddled up the river, with the tide in our favour, for the island on which Fort Banca stood.

“‘I could scarcely suppose,’ I remarked to Miss Cherry Pakenham, who sat next to me in the canoe, ‘that this part of the world had a climate so destructive to human life, the scenery is so beautiful. This is a fine open view, and the air, though hot, not overpoweringly so.’

“‘Ah! you will be deceived by all you see,’ said the young girl; ‘this is rather a favourable month, and this year has altogether been less destructive to human life. There is Fort Banca. I hope those horrid French ships will not attempt to come up the river, and fire upon the fort.’

“‘It looks very strong,’ I observed, ‘and, from its position, difficult to attack.’

“‘Papa says it’s all outward show; for if an enemy gets up the river, they would soon knock it to pieces.’

“Just as it began to grow dusk, we reached the landing place at Fort Banca. Colonel Pakenham’s friend, Captain Stanhope, was waiting to receive him.

“‘In the name of Fate,’ said the Captain, shaking his friend the Colonel by the hand, ‘why did you not come up the river in the boats, instead of taking to the woods? The jungle is dangerous.’

“ ‘Faith, I thought my two little girls would have a worse chance if the enemy opened fire on the boats,’ returned the Colonel, ‘and I was so anxious for them that I started on the first opening of the fire from the French ships. Cowardly rascals to fire into the streets of the town, and our flag hauled down!’

“ ‘Well, here you are, safe and sound,’ said the Captain, looking at me with surprise; ‘but who is this young man—a French prisoner?’

“ ‘Not exactly; an Englishman under false colours.’

“The Colonel then introduced me to his friend, who very kindly welcomed me. We were all made very comfortable. I was located with the Colonel’s family, and for a few days we enjoyed quietness and peace. I was in dangerous company, for Miss Pakenham had every quality besides beauty to engage the affections of our sex. Captain Stanhope’s daughters were exceedingly agreeable and pretty; and altogether, life would have been exceedingly agreeable in Fort Banca, had not there been several deaths, owing to the crowded state of the fort. We were not long, however, left in fancied security.

“One morning the alarm was sounded; the topsails of a large ship were seen ascending the river, and very soon it was ascertained, by the arrival of a canoe, that the French frigate, the *Félicité*, and my old ship, were coming up to attack the fort. All who could carry arms were called to aid in the defence. I gladly offered myself, and was enrolled amongst the defenders of the fort. The two frigates, having taken up a position, at once opened fire upon us, to which we replied with spirit. I felt most anxious to give my old tyrant as large a dose of shot as I could, and the second day, for some reason or other, he dropped behind the *Félicité*. We learned afterwards my old captain had been mortally wounded by a splinter, and died the following day; but the first lieutenant having the command, the frigate was brought into place again, and commenced a determined and fierce fire against us. We had several killed, numbers wounded, and two of our best guns dismounted, besides our walls knocked about our ears. The enemy gave us no peace, night or day. At length, nearly worn out, our ammunition almost exhausted, and half our little garrison *hors de combat*, it was agreed, after a long consultation, to abandon the fort. The inhabitants of the town, therefore, began removing their effects in canoes and boats, intending to go up the river to a negro settlement, till the French fleet sailed. To deceive the enemy we kept up the best cannonading we could, though, in truth, the walls were nearly in ruins. The departure of the inhabitants from the town and fort could not be seen from the ships, for the island and sudden curve of the river completely concealed our movements.

"I must now mention a circumstance I failed to do before. Amongst the persons who took refuge in the fort was an English settler, calling himself John Sinclair; he said he was of good family, from Hampshire, was about eight-and-twenty, tall, rather well-looking, and strong and active. Still, you could not call him a gentleman. He possessed a considerable sum of money when he arrived from England, with which he purchased land and negroes, male and female. For two years he led a wild, irregular life; was said to have committed some very bad acts, in fact, he began to be shunned and feared; but, all of a sudden he sold his land, purchased a house in the new town, kept five or six negroes, and set up a kind of store, and, up to the arrival of Colonel Packenham, lived tolerably quiet. It seems he saw the Colonel's eldest daughter, and openly declared his admiration of her, and became so marked in his endeavours to intrude himself on Miss Packenham's presence, that the Colonel got angry, and some harsh words ensued; after this John Sinclair kept quiet. He was in the fort when we arrived, and made himself useful, avoided offending the Colonel, but seemed to take a positive dislike to me, and one day had the impudence to tell me I was half a Frenchman. It was no time to quarrel, therefore I merely replied I would take an opportunity to convince him I was entirely an Englishman. The increasing dangers of the siege so occupied us all that I thought little about John Sinclair. I passed all my spare time in the company of the Colonel's daughters, and every day increased the feeling of affection I experienced for Cherry Packenham.

"When the garrison had resolved that the townspeople and all the females should leave, the Colonel was persuaded to leave also with his daughters, for we were only going to keep up a mock defence of the place, to give the inhabitants time to get some miles up the river, out of all fear of pursuit. I saw my kind friends off, and that the two girls and their two black attendants were in a good rowing boat, and bade them farewell for a couple of days. To my surprise, I observed John Sinclair leave in a fast boat, with his four negroes pulling. I did not dwell long on the circumstance, but in the evening I happened to hear his name mentioned by Captain Stanhope. 'He left in his boat this morning,' said I.

"'Yes,' returned the captain, 'but he said he should be back to-night; he is a bad fellow; I have my suspicions that some years of his life he has either been a pirate or a slave-dealer; and there's something mysterious now in his movements.'

"The next day we perceived the *Felicité* warping nearer to us, so we prepared for our departure, as the fort would be demolished in a few hours. Leaving the British colours flying,

after discharging our three cannons—the only guns fit for service—at the frigate, we embarked in two six-paddled canoes, Captain Stanhope, his two sons, myself, and six soldiers in one, and Lieutenant Markham, a sergeant, and eight men in the other. As we pulled up the river with the flood-tide, we heard a tremendous fire opened upon the old crumbling walls of the fort, and then suddenly cease. ‘Ah!’ said Captain Stanhope, ‘they have found out that the birds are gone.’ We pulled on till the tide turned, and anchored for the night in a little creek, erected two tents we had brought with us, and made ourselves comfortable till the turn of the tide.

“‘This would be a bad adventure a month later,’ said Captain Stanhope as we rested, the Captain and Lieutenant smoking their pipes. I had not imbibed that taste, so sat enjoying a bottle of good wine, and thinking of Cherry Packenham. I asked, ‘Why?’ ‘Because,’ said the Captain, ‘some of us would be sure to catch the fever, for where we are going the country is scarcely cleared, and the jungles are pestiferous.’

“‘How far up have our friends gone?’ I demanded.

“‘Perhaps not more than two or three leagues; there is a deserted village, and plenty of huts which will afford shelter till those infernal Frenchmen take themselves off. I am sure, having no chance of plunder, they will be away from this coast in a few days. We shall then return to the town, and repair the damage.’

“The next morning early we took down our tents, packed up, and started with the first of the flood. This was a suffocatingly hot day, the river on both sides covered with an impenetrable jungle. About three o’clock we came in sight of the clearance, where the huts were; we saw the canoes all at anchor before the place, and numbers of the inhabitants crowding down to the river’s bank. ‘There is something wrong,’ said Captain Stanhope, and we paddled rapidly up. I felt, even then, I could not say why, unaccountably uneasy. As soon as we reached the banks, several persons met us, all eager to speak.

“‘What’s the matter? what’s the matter?’ said Captain Stanhope.

“‘We have bad news to tell you, Captain,’ said a gentleman of the name of Creigh, an Irish settler—‘John Sinclair carried off, in the night, Colonel Packenham’s two daughters, and the two negro girls.’

“‘Good God!’ I exclaimed, jumping ashore in an agony of mind indescribable. ‘Has no one pursued them? Which way did they go? Who helped this villain to commit such an outrage?’

“‘We can’t say,’ said several bystanders; ‘the Colonel

slept in one of the huts, with his daughters, their female attendants, and the negro Pompey. In the morning the colonel was found gagged and bound, lying on the floor of the hut, and not a soul else was to be seen. All the colonel could say was, that in his sleep he was seized, a blanket forcibly held over his face and head to stifle his shouts; he was then gagged and bound, and the blanket left round his head; had he not received assistance he would have been shortly suffocated; he is very ill!

“‘Who has gone after the ruffians?’ demanded Captain Stanhope, boiling with rage.

“‘No one as yet,’ returned several persons, together. ‘Most of the men have gone across the country to — to see for provisions; all here are mostly women and children; we waited till you came up with the men.’

“I requested to be shown where the colonel was, whilst Captain Stanhope picked out half-a-dozen active men, and three or four active guides. The captain could not go himself, for he was lame, but his two sons promised to accompany me in the steamer. It was well known that they must have been carried off in Sinclair’s boat, for it was gone. In a most agitated state of mind, I ran to the hut where the colonel was, and entering, found him in a high fever and quite delirious. The only medical man we had was with him; nor could we learn anything from his ravings. It was no use waiting, so in less than two hours we were ready to start, well armed, for pursuit. Captain Stanhope’s two sons, Lieutenant Dobbs, and four of his men, and myself, with four good negro guides, formed the party in pursuit; each carried six rounds of ball cartridge, and provisions for four days. The provision was very simple, consisting of merely biscuit, cheese, and gourds full of rum. We could shoot plenty of game for food if required. It was surmised by Captain Stanhope that Sinclair would go no farther up the river than — —, he might then carry their boat over a track of land to a lake about two miles from the river’s brink. This lake was above twenty miles long, and from it ran a river communicating with the sea. At the mouth of this river was a negro village, and sometimes vessels touched at this place. It had been suspected latterly that Sinclair had associates on the coast, who had a vessel somewhere; at all events, we could easily see if the boat had been carried over land or abandoned, for the tide went no higher up the river, and the current without the tide was too fierce to stem.

“Accordingly, we started in our long light canoe, easy of carriage, and proceeded up the river, through a wild and entangled country, clothed with wood and jungle to the very water’s edge, and full of wild beasts. It was very evident no

landing could be effected on either shore, except at great risks, and quite impossible to force females through. At length we came to the end of the tide, and to the spot indicated. Our negroes at once pointed to the cleared space, and on grounding our canoe, we at once saw the tracks of many feet, also the marks of hauling a boat up the sloping bank. It was too late to cross to the lake that day, so the canoe was hauled up, a tent rapidly constructed of branches of trees and a quantity of matting, brought for that special purpose.

"With the earliest dawn we commenced our way to the lake, dragging our canoe over a narrow slip of swampy country. The track of the other boat and the marks of many feet could also be seen, and amongst them those of the feet of the two black girls, but no trace of the feet of the two Misses Packenham, so we conjectured they had been carried in the boat. It was a dead level, and no doubt at times was overflowed by either the waters of the lake or the river. About noon we reached the borders of as dismal and gloomy a lake as could be imagined, the shores being covered with low entangled masses of vegetation. No trees or high land on either side, the water black, and a hot breeze swept over its surface; there were no islands, and its length appeared about twenty miles, by three and sometime five miles in breadth. From where we were no river could be seen running into it, and yet it must be fed by either streams or springs, for the negroes said where it ran into the sea the stream was broad and rapid, but before reaching the sea it dwindled away into the several small unnavigable streams, running through dangerous sands, bordering a safe kind of creek where small vessels often anchored, and where slaves were often shipped. They also said that the people were very wild and bad, and would seize and sell any one they could get for slaves.

"As we launched our canoe, the wind began to blow with great violence from the sea; we were just at the end of the rainy season. The last week in October the rains were over, but sudden gales and squalls were frequent. By keeping close in with the western shore we were enabled to traverse the lake, but the twenty miles took us till dark, so we were forced to pull our canoe upon a bank, and make the best shelter we could for the night, amidst a frightful storm of rain, thunder, and lightning. The next morning it cleared, but blew tremendously in from the sea. We resolved to leave our boat, and make for the negro village on foot across a sandy waste. I was standing on the summit of a small hillock of sand, gazing in the direction of the negro village, when I saw a man coming across one of the streams that ran through the sands towards me. I soon discovered he was a negro with a bandage round his head; he

had no clothing except his waist-cloth : to my intense joy, as he came nearer I recognised Pompey, Colonel Packenham's faithful negro. He recognised me before I knew him, and the poor fellow's joy was great. His head and hair were matted with blood. Some of our party soon joined us. Pompey, in his own way, gave the account of their seizure. He said he was sleeping, covered with a piece of matting, outside his master's hut, and the first thing that woke him was a blow on the head with a piece of wood, but as he strove to get up, a negro—he saw him plain enough—struck him senseless with a hatchet: in fact the poor fellow had a frightful gash in his head. When he recovered he found himself in a large boat, full of negroes and three white men, with the Misses Packenham crying bitterly in each other's arms, and their two black servants. When he attempted to move, the negroes rowing the boat kicked and beat him, so he lay still. When they arrived at the halting place, they stripped him, gave him a cloth and an old piece of canvas to tie over the bleeding cut in his head, and then dragged the boat over the land with the two young girls in her; all the rest had to walk. Pompey was made to assist in dragging the boat; then they passed down the lake, and got, by pulling the boat through the shallows, into the creek before the negro town. There was a fine schooner at anchor before the village, and on board this vessel they carried the distracted girls, and thrust Pompey into the hold, which was fitted up for two hundred slaves, of which there were one hundred and thirty on board. It was a Spanish vessel, and carried twelve hands; sixty or seventy slaves remained to ship, but from the heavy gale and neglecting proper precautions, she went ashore from the force of the wind, though there was no sea; in the confusion Pompey made his escape, with several other slaves; but they separated before Pompey fell in with us.

“We all now assembled and consulted as to how we should proceed. We were ten well-armed men; the storm had wonderfully befriended us, for it was very certain had the schooner remained afloat, it would by this time have been at sea, and the unfortunate girls lost. It was horrible to think what might be their fate. As I said, we were ten in all, well-armed and determined men. We thought it probable that we should have to contend with the crew of the schooner, and John Sinclair and his associates; but if we could get at the place where the slaves were confined—for when the schooner stranded they were taken out of her and confined in the great sheds erected for the purpose of holding them till ready to be embarked—by giving them freedom we should greatly embarrass our enemies. So being resolved, and ready to set out, we followed Pompey, who undertook to take us round the base

of the hill, so that we should not be perceived till ready to make a rush upon the sheds. I asked Pompey where he thought the two young ladies were confined. He said he was sure they were in the cabin of the schooner. She was, though ashore, nearly upright, but they could not get her off before the next rise in the tide, and that would not be for four days.

"After an hour's walking and wading, we got safely to the back of the hills sheltering the cove and the slave station, and then, by a rugged path, well known to Pompey—for he himself had once been a prisoner there and about to be shipped when he escaped—we came nearly in view of the station, when our ears were saluted by the reports of muskets, the shouts, cries, and fierce yells of negroes; and, rushing forward, we beheld below us a scene of indescribable contention. Some two or three hundred negroes were furiously attacking a number of white men, who tried to save themselves behind the huts, firing and killing many of the negroes. With the white men were a number of blacks fighting on their side. Lying on the beach was the schooner, and on her decks were several men, trying to bring the two eight-pounders she had on board to bear upon the liberated slaves, of whom a large party were carrying combustibles to fire the schooner, which lay high and dry.

"'Good God!' I exclaimed, 'we have no time to lose; the blacks will fire the schooner; let us make for the vessel.'

"We rushed down the hill, and in five minutes were in the midst of the conflict. Ten or twelve blacks and three whites lay stark and stiff on the ground.

"Pompey kept screaming to his countrymen that we were not come against them, but against Sinclair and the people of the schooner.

"The blacks raised a tremendous yell, and made a rush upon Sinclair and five white men, who were defending a large shed; but John Sinclair and his men saw us at once, and levelled their muskets at us as we advanced, wounding two of our party slightly. They then, cutlass and pistol in hand, made for the schooner, just as the crew, having brought the bow gun to act, fired it loaded with grape amongst the infuriated slaves, killing several and wounding numbers. This only exasperated them ten-fold. I was the youngest and fastest on foot of our little band, and, with a cutlass and pistol, I rushed after John Sinclair, to cut him off before he could get into the schooner. His five companions were some yards ahead—most anxious to reach the vessel, knowing they could make a desperate fight of it from her deck. I came within a yard of him, and, in my bitterness of feeling, I could

have shot him, but I did not. He heard me calling on him, and, turning, deliberately fired his pistol, with a frightful curse, within a foot of my face. The ball merely raised the skin of my cheek, and then I made a cut at him with my cutlass, but he was a strong, powerful man—he knocked up the weapon, and made a cut at me, but slipped and stumbled. The next instant three or four negroes threw themselves, with yells horrible to hear, upon the man, and casting him upon the beach, despite all I could do, beat his brains out with hatchets; but the same instant the gun from the schooner was levelled at them, and stretched many of them, bleeding and wounded, beside their victim. A body of more than one hundred and fifty negroes now rushed frantically at the schooner; our party, excepting a few wounds and bruises, were all right, and Lieutenant Dobbs called out to those on the schooner's deck to surrender, and give up the two young ladies on board, and their attendants, or the blacks would fire the vessel and murder them. Their reply was a volley of oaths and pistol shots. So we swung ourselves up by the ropes from the bowsprit, the blacks following, yelling with fury; but the nine men on board did not stop to resist us—they swung down over the quarters and made a rush for their boat, launched her, and pulled out into the bay. The schooner was gained by the maddened negroes, who commenced ransacking every part of her for spirits, and, having hauled up a cask, they broke in the head, and, with the yells and shouts of demons, commenced a negro orgie.

“Whilst this was going on, Lieutenant Dobbs and I broke open the cabin door, which was locked, and a bar placed across it. A cry of despair came from the cabin; I rushed in, and, with inexpressible delight, beheld the two sisters locked in each other's arms, and the two horrified black girls on their knees beside them. But a faint light entered the cabin from bulls' eyes on the deck, the skylight having been covered over. At first the two girls, who were paralysed by the firing and the hideous uproar above, did not recognise us as deliverers, but the sound of my voice re-assured them. Starting up, they threw themselves into my arms, and embraced me as a brother, with hysterical emotion, and bursting into a flood of tears.

“Pompey came rushing into the cabin, saying—‘Massa, massa, be quick; de fire de ship, and turn debbles wid drink; de turn and kill us, may be!’ The men above called out also to be quick, for the negroes were raving mad, and had set fire to the fore-cabin of the schooner.

“Having assured the terrified girls that their father was alive and quite safe—I did not like to say he was in a fever—we hurried on deck. It was a scene of horror. The negroes had

drunk the spirit as if it were water ; some howling and yelling, leaping about the deck, others lying about stupefied. Flames were coming up from the fore-cabin, and a set of drunken negroes were dancing around it, hand in hand, screaming and yelling.

" 'We must be off this instant,' said Henry Stanhope ; 'they will surely turn upon us, if only one black rascal gives the signal. We have ropes ready to lower the females over the side.'

"In a few minutes the men flung themselves over the side, whilst Lieutenant Dobbs and I lowered the almost fainting girls, when, as Henry Stanhope expected, two or three of the drunken wretches cried out, 'Let us kill the whites ; don't let them have the women.' This was in their own language, which of course I did not understand, but Pompey, in his way, told us what they said. However, we all got out of the schooner safely—her foremast, rigging, and sails a sheet of flame. The negroes, all that could, threw themselves pell-mell over the side, for it was getting too hot for them, whilst we, supporting and partly carrying the poor girls, hurried from the place, avoiding the huts, and making the best of our way to our boat, which we reached at night-fall, thanking God that we had so fortunately succeeded in rescuing the Misses Pakenham, and escaped from the drunken fury of the liberated slaves."

CHAPTER XXVI.

JULIAN ARDEN was unable to continue his narrative, for the corvette had approached so close to the French coast as to require all her commander's attention to their situation. The *Onyx* was hove-to till daybreak, and during the night was disguised as much as possible, so as to resemble a French vessel of war. Towards morning the tricolour was hoisted, and the vessel turned her head seaward. They were then about three leagues to the eastward of Havre. It became a fine, clear day, and before noon they beheld a fine French brig running for the port of Havre.

The captain evidently mistook the *Onyx* for what she was not, for he came unsuspectingly into the jaws of the lion, and when too late endeavoured to fly ; but the corvette ran alongside and took possession. The brig had a rich cargo, and had, owing to the fog, escaped the several cruisers to the westward, only to become a prize in sight of her destined harbour.

"This is exactly what we wanted," said Captain O'Loughlin to Julian Arden ; "this craft will furnish you with cash and

garments suited to your purpose, and also with papers. We will select these belonging to a young seaman called Lebeau ; I have looked them over. He is second mate of this brig ; about your age and height. I have ordered a suit of his garments to be brought on board. The brig, with a midshipman and eight hands, I will send across Channel to Portsmouth, and land her crew some miles down along the coast. I will then put you on shore, with a supply of cash, close to Havre, where you say the Chateau Coulancourt is situated. With your perfect knowledge of French, you will easily pass through the country without suspicion. I shall cruise on and off this coast till I receive orders to go elsewhere. Now, should circumstances arise that might induce you to return on board, you will recognise this corvette, and any kind of signal, should we happen to be within sight, will cause me to send a boat for you."

Julian Arden warmly thanked the kind-hearted O'Loughlin for his attention, and wish to render him service.

"You are the brother of Sir Oscar de Bracy's protégé—that's enough to ensure my services ; and if you were not, I should still wish to serve you, now that I have the pleasure of knowing you," replied the warm-hearted sailor, pressing the young man's hand.

As he was to be landed the following night, Julian Arden resumed his adventures in the evening.

"We all felt relieved and highly elated on regaining our boat ; well aware how difficult would have been the enterprise against John Sinclair and his associates had not the slaves broken their bondage. The cause of all this bloodshed and fury on the part of the slaves, Pompey told us, was the frightful cruelty practised upon them chiefly by John Sinclair. For the slightest offence they were flogged till they fainted, and the night the schooner stranded several tried to escape along with Pompey. In revenge for this, John Sinclair and four of his most hardened associates cruelly flogged and beat the rest, and pinched their flesh with hot pincers, and other cruelties. One of their number contrived to free his hands, and by the most incredible exertions he freed two more, and then all were untied ; and setting up a yell of triumph, they broke down the sheds, seized the stakes as weapons, and fell upon their oppressors just at the very moment we happened to arrive. What became of them I know not ; the schooner was entirely burned, as well as the negro village. The boat with the seamen put to sea, and were perhaps picked up, or landed farther down the coast.

"We made the best shelter we could for the rescued captives, and the next morning early embarked on the lake, and by night-fall arrived on the banks of the river without accident. The next day we reached the settlement, and were received with shouts of joy and congratulations. Colonel Pakenham regained his

senses on the restoration of his beloved children, and four or five days' rest completely restored him ; a week afterwards the French ships sailed, and we all returned to the town. The inhabitants commenced at once to repair the damages committed by the French, but, unfortunately, the fever began to show itself and to spread fatally. Many were attacked and died. I had a slight seizure, but soon recovered. Miss Packenham had a severe attack, but, thank God, she recovered. One of Captain Stanhope's daughters and poor Henry Stanhope, who so bravely helped to rescue the Misses Packenham, fell victims. So deeply anxious became the colonel to leave, that a month afterwards we all embarked in a small English brig that put in from the Cape. She was a slow sailer, and her captain a thorough seaman ; but the fates were against us ; to avoid falling in with any of the French cruisers, we steered a wide course. After getting a glimpse of the Spanish coast, and just as we were flattering ourselves, and on the eve of sighting the Irish coast, we were chased by a French privateer. Our poor little brig, as I said, sailed like a tub, and on receiving a shot through her mainsail hauled down her colours and backed topsails. The privateer's boats came alongside, put a prize crew on board, but otherwise behaved extremely well ; of course all the colonel's effects and baggage became plunder, but they offered no insult to the ladies, and left them in possession of the cabin. Colonel Packenham was permitted to remain in the brig, but the captain, myself, and four of the crew were removed into the privateer. I suppressed any mention of my feelings on this untoward conclusion to our voyage ; I could only press poor Cherry's hand—the tears were in her eyes ; but her brave, noble father cheered us by his example, and put faith and trust in a merciful Providence who had hitherto protected us through so many trials. The next morning a brig under French colours hove in sight. Captain Eltherme, who commanded the Sanspareil privateer, said to me—

“ ‘ That's a wolf in a sheep's skin ; that's an English brig, and too strong for me. ’ ”

“ How my heart beat with hope ! The privateer hoisted signals, the brig answered by hoisting English colours and firing a gun. The Frenchman cursed and swore against luck, stamped upon deck, but ended by crowding sail and abandoning the prize. ”

“ ‘ Ah ! ’ said Captain Eltherme, looking into my face, and seeing, I suppose, my delight at the colonel and his daughter's escape, though cut to the heart at my own situation ; ‘ don't you think he's going to catch me ; I have the legs of that confounded brig ; ’ and he had. The privateer ran into the river of Bordeaux, whilst the brig returned, and I dare say re-took the English craft. ”

"My prospects were now dismal in the extreme ; I was taken as an Englishman, and might remain years in prison. I might be recognised as Julian Coulancourt, and then shot as a deserter from the Volentier.

" 'I tell you what, monsieur,' said Captain Eltherme to me, 'I'm not a bad kind of man for a privateer's man—eh, mon garcon ?'

" 'Well, no,' I replied ; 'I have found you very kind, and you behaved generously to my friends.'

" 'Eh, bien, mon garcon, listen to me. You speak French too much like a native to be an Englishman—besides, you have something of the Frenchman about you.' I did not consider the captain very complimentary, but I let him go on. 'If I send you ashore with the rest, you may remain in prison for years. You speak English like a native.'

" 'I am a native,' I exclaimed, rather vexed.

" 'Eh, bien ! be it so,' he returned. 'Still, you can be useful to me when I capture English vessels ; stay with me.'

" 'But you do not suppose, Captain Eltherme,' I exclaimed, 'that I am going to fight against my own countrymen ?'

" 'No ; mon Dieu ! no,' said he ; 'I do not want you to fight ; parole d'honneur ; but take my advice, and do not go to prison. I may be taken in my turn, then you will have your liberty ; are you satisfied ? You shall share my cabin with my officers, and no one shall insult you.'

"I consented ; we shook hands ; and the Sanspareil, after landing poor Captain Botten and his four men at the fort, put to sea. On board the Sanspareil I remained fourteen months. She took several valuable prizes and returned to Bordeaux, and as I gave my word not to attempt to escape, I went ashore with him. I did him, and my countrymen taken in the prizes, good service ; I saved several from captivity ; and, during the month we remained in Bordeaux, I was received into the captain's family, and treated with the greatest kindness. I told him, after some months, finding him a true-hearted, kind man, who I really was, and how I was connected with one of the first families in France. We again put to sea. You may be sure, though I really wished no misfortune to occur to my worthy skipper, I still looked forward to a change of fortune. The Sanspareil was a splendid sailing vessel, and nearly two hundred and fifty tons burden, with a fine crew ; but her career was drawing to a close. We left Bordeaux for a cruise in the Channel ; we were but three days out when we encountered one of the most tremendous gales, the captain said, he had ever witnessed. Every sail we attempted to set was blown into ribbons, whilst a tremendous sea cleared our decks of boats and every inch of bulwark. Our rigging snapped like whipcord, and, finally, our

main-mast went over the side, carrying with it three of the crew; so we drove up Channel under our foremast without a rag on it. The sea was awful to look at, and the weather so thick that we expected each moment, ignorant of where we were, to run ashore. At length, under a deluge of rain, the wind shifted to the nor'-west, and at break of day the sky suddenly cleared, and to the captain's consternation we found ourselves within gunshot of an English frigate, under storm staysails. English colours were shown on our foremast, but the Sanspareil was well known, and considered too great a pest to be spared; and the ship, as we shot close by, lifted on a huge billow, hailed through a speaking trumpet, ordering us to heave-to, or she would sink us. Captain Eltherme, even in that tremendous sea, sought to escape; and with great bravery—for heave-to he could not—lowered the English flag, and hoisted the tricolor. He imagined in that boiling sea the English frigate would never open fire, but she did; the iron shower passed over without injury to us; but another, as the frigate paid off, gave us our death wound, the shot going into our side as we rolled over on a cross sea. Some accident evidently happened to the frigate, for instead of following us she again bore up in the wind, whilst we contrived to set a stay-sail on the foremast, and then bore away for the French coast; but we soon found that the pumps would not keep the vessel free, neither could the carpenters plug the shot-hole in the breaking seas. Just as the sun was setting, and we were fast settling in the water, we came up with the French frigate *Prudente* lying to. Signals of distress were hoisted, and as we passed under her stern, we stated we were sinking. With immense difficulty, and by almost incredible exertions with hawsers and barrels, for no boat could live, we were all taken out except nine, who went down with the unfortunate *Sanspareil*. It was five days after this that the *Prudente* was encountered by you, Captain O'Loughlin. Determined to be free or perish, I rushed up the rigging, and, thank God! succeeded in reaching this ship in safety. I have now brought, I fear, my tedious narrative, to which you have listened with patience, to a close."

"Well, by Jove, my dear young friend, you have had your share of trials for one so young. Your narrative has greatly interested me, and now that you have finished, I will give you some intelligence that will, I know, gratify you. When the *Vengeance* foundered, on the 1st of June, in the engagement with Lord Howe's fleet, the English boats saved many lives. Captain Renaudin was picked up by one boat, and his gallant little son by another. Each thought the other lost, when, to their intense joy, they again met in Portsmouth."

"How rejoiced I am to hear this intelligence!" said Julian

Arden, "for a nobler or braver spirit never breathed than Captain Renaudin."

"He has been done justice to, I assure you. Our papers of that time gave the full particulars of the foundering of the *Vengeance*, and of the father and son's reunion. The next piece of news I have to tell you is, that not very long ago I saw an article in the *Times* newspaper, announcing the appointment of a Lieutenant-General Packenham to the command of the garrison at Plymouth, mentioning the gallant services of the general whilst in India. I have no doubt but that this Lieutenant-General Packenham is the same Colonel Packenham you knew."

"I dare say it is," returned Julian, "and I trust time has not obliterated from Miss Packenham's mind all memory of my unfortunate self."

"Say fortunate, my dear young friend, for you have been providentially saved during severe trials. Do not, like most lovers absent from their charmers, give way to imaginary evils. 'Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.'"

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE following day, Julian Arden, attired in the garments of the French seaman, Louis Lebeau, and furnished with his papers and a good sum in French money, took leave of his kind friends on board the *Onyx*, was landed in the dusk on the French coast, actually within half a mile of the spot where the lugger, the *Vengeance*, had been run ashore by William Thornton, and his follower, Bill Saunders. Julian felt himself perfectly secure in his character of a French seaman, but he felt also greatly anxious to discover the fate of his dear mother; whether she still enjoyed freedom, or was under the surveillance of the Republic. Though he had no doubt, when daylight broke, that he should recognise from memory many of the features of the surrounding country, still, in the dark, he was loth to commence his journey to Coulancourt.

It was the month of June, so there was very little hardship in passing the night under the shelter of one of the sand-hills. Stretching himself at his ease, he lay ruminating over the past, and picturing to himself prospects for the future. He had many visions, during his uneasy sleep, but Cherry Packenham was the predominating one.

Julian remained quiet till about six in the morning; he then gave himself a shake, bathed his face in an adjacent pool, and

mounting a sand-hill, cast a glance over the country before him. Like William Thornton, he was at once attracted by the village spire, and the creek losing itself amongst the sand-hills.

"Ah!" said Julian, joyfully, "I remember yonder village; that's where good Dame Moret lived. She was so fond of me when a boy, when I used to play and romp with her daughters. My good old stepfather, the Duke, was alive then," soliloquised Julian; "the axe of the guillotine ended his days."

Then he recollected the grief and agony of his mother.

Descending the hill, he resolved to proceed to the village, to the house of Dame Moret, have a look at the Château Coulan-court, and afterwards be guided by circumstances.

Acting upon this resolve, he crossed the country towards the creek; but coming upon a road where he lost sight of the village, which lay in a thickly-wooded district, he altered his course and followed the road to the right, and presently met a cart laden with ropes, blocks, sails, and all kinds of seafaring requisites; three or four sailors were walking alongside of the cart, which was drawn by three horses harnessed with ropes. One of the men, a broad, muscular man, better dressed than the others, and in manner and bearing like the captain of a ship, was walking in front. He stopped as Julian came up, and looking at him, said—

"Well, my hearty, where do you hail from, coming this road; or were you seeking me where I am repairing the Vengeance?"

Julian gave a slight start at the name of the Vengeance, saying to himself—

"Then, ten to one, this is the skipper of the privateer that Captain O'Loughlin mentioned, as having caused the imprisonment of Sir Sidney Smith and Sir Oscar de Bracy."

This reflection did not require a second's delay in answering the privateer's man, who in reality was the captain of the Vengeance.

"I hail from Rouen, messmate," replied Julian, quite unconcernedly, and imitating, which he could do with ease, the manner and language of a seaman. "I have heard of the Vengeance, but I was not seeking you. I am going on to the village, and then to Havre, to get a passage to Rouen."

"Diable!" said the Captain, "you are out of your course; how did you get upon this part of the coast?"

"I was landed by my own desire," returned Julian, "from the brig Sybille, from Bordeaux to Hamburg. The captain and I could not agree, so we parted; he put me ashore close by here. How far is it to Havre?"

"Well, some two leagues," answered the Captain; "but I tell you what—you had better join my craft. She will be all

right in less than a month ; I am in want of hands, and as the Vengeance is known to be one of the fastest and most successful privateers out of any French port, you cannot do better."

"In a month," observed Julian, appearing to think ; "yes, that would suit me well enough. I don't like the merchant service, and was thinking of serving the Republic, by entering one of their ships of war."

"Don't be such a sacre fool," said the Captain, "take my word for it, no life like a privateer's man."

"Well, where shall I hear of you, if I make up my mind before the month's out ?" inquired Julian.

"My craft is repairing at the mouth of the creek," returned the privateer's man, "about a mile from here ; do you intend stopping at the village yonder ?"

"Yes, for an hour or two."

"Well, then, ask for Dame Moret ; she's my wife's mother. She'll give you a good breakfast, and a glass of good eau-de-vie ; and if you will join me within the month, seek me there, you'll hear of me ; I like young, active fellows like you. Stay, what's your name ?"

"Louis Lebeau."

"Ah ! very good ; heave ahead, my lads," said the captain to the men, who stood leaning against the cart, smoking their pipes and listening.

Julian pursued his course. "So," thought he, soliloquising, "the Vengeance has met with some accident since her attempted capture. If Captain O'Loughlin knew she was repairing within this creek, he would assuredly land and burn her."

He walked on, passing several persons, who paid no attention to him further than the usual "bon jour," and entered the village, memory returning at the sight of some familiar object, and proceeding direct towards Dame Moret's farm-house. Three or four women were busily occupied in various ways in the large yard before the dwelling-house ; groups of turkeys, with "Maitre Jacques" at their head, were gabbling incessantly, answered in anything but harmonious tones by a flock of geese, whilst whole flocks of pigeons kept flitting about.

"Can I see Dame Moret ?" asked Julian Arden to pretty Rose Moret, who just then came out of the house with a pail in her hand.

Rose looked up at the speaker, though she could scarcely have remembered the curly-haired and handsome boy of twelve years old, for she was then only eight years old herself ; but she looked with something of surprise in her manner into the young man's bronzed and handsome face, as she replied—

"Oui, monsieur ; come in, and you will see my mother."

"Can this be little Rose Moret?" said Julian, unintentionally half-aloud, as he gazed with earnest and almost watery eyes into the very pretty features of the maiden.

Rose Moret heard the words; she coloured to the temples as she started back; but Julian, with a smile, passed the surprised girl, and entered the lofty and wide kitchen.

Dame Moret turned round, with a large tureen in her hand, and looked up into the stranger's face. The dame seemed also surprised, but she merely said—

"Well, monsieur, what can I do for you?"

"Your son-in-law, dame, whom I met half an hour or so ago, requested me to call here; he wishes me to join his craft."

"Ah!" said the dame, with a serious and changed expression of countenance; "then take an old woman's advice—be an honest seaman, and leave privateering alone. Your face and your voice, young man, raise strange thoughts of the past in my mind. What is your name, and where do you come from?"

Julian looked round; the dame and he were alone, for the servant girl had followed Rose from the kitchen.

"My name, dame," said Julian, in a low voice; "does no recollection of Julian Arden——"

"Ah! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" exclaimed the old woman, clasping her hands, and thereby letting the tureen drop to the floor, where it was shattered to pieces; and then, throwing her arms round his neck, she kissed him, as she often had done before, with all the warm affection of a mother.

"Ah, Dame Moret! Dame Moret!" said Julian, looking affectionately at his old nurse, "how vividly the past comes through the brain; it seems as yesterday that I stood here, and romped through the dear old building with your three girls."

"Hush! some one is coming," said Dame Moret.

"Recollect—I am Louis Lebeau, of Rouen, a sailor."

He had hardly time to say more, when the clank of a steel sheath holding a sword struck against the pavement without, and the next instant two gendarmes, with their cocked hats, entered the kitchen.

Dame Moret was stooping down, carefully picking up the fragments of the soup-tureen, whilst Julian, carelessly whistling an air, took a short pipe from his pocket, and walked to the fire to light it.

"You have had a smash, Dame Moret," said one of the men.

"Yes, misfortunes will happen, Monsieur François Perrin," said the dame; "what has brought you to Caux to-day—anything new?"

"No, dame, only my customary visit, you know, to the château. Monsieur Plessis and family are arrived, and he has a friend with him, we understand, a Monsieur de Tourville.

Monsieur de Gramont, you have heard, I dare say, is appointed maire of this arrondissement, having quitted the army."

"Eh, he is young," said the dame, "to leave the army, and our country in want of soldiers. He is married, I suppose; but will you take a glass of my wine or brandy, eh, Monsieur Perrin?"

"Mon Dieu! avec plaisir, dame; you have always a kind heart and a good bottle of wine for a friend." And the two men sat down at a table, but Sergeant Perrin kept eyeing Julian Arden, who had lit his pipe, and was sauntering out to the yard.

"Pardon me, young man," said the Sergeant, "are you one of the crew of Captain Gaudet's craft, the Vengeance?"

"No, monsieur, I am not; though I think I shall join him."

Dame Moret looked very uneasy, but she did not let the gendarmes see that she was so. She placed a couple of bottles of wine, and glasses, some nice oaten cake, and a jar of preserves, on the table.

"Cà, this is a luxury, dame," said the Sergeant, but, turning to Julian, he said, "Where do you come from, young man, and what is your name? You are a stranger to me."

"My name is Louis Lebeau," said Julian, coolly; "I am going to Rouen in a few days, after I have settled with Captain Pierre Gaudet."

"Sacre bleu! mon garçon, do not hesitate. Captain Gaudet is a brave man, and the Vengeance, if she ever gets afloat again, is the best craft out of Havre, or Brest either. She took more prizes than any privateer on the coast, till that sacre frigate Anglais came in, and thought to cut her out of Havre in the very face of the forts."

"How so?" said Julian, quietly sitting down, Dame Moret handing him a glass, and putting a bottle of wine beside him, feeling quite relieved from her fears, seeing him take the questioning so coolly, and knowing, as far as manner and language went, that he was a perfect Frenchman.

"Why, you see, those devils of English will do anything when there's gold to be had. One of their frigates came to an anchor in the south road, and the captain with his boats thought to walk off with the Vengeance privateer. She was at anchor before the town. Diable! their insolence is wonderful, to think of taking, as it were, the bit out of your mouth."

"Just like them," said Julian, filling his glass. "Your health, sergeant. Those islanders would take the teeth out of your mouth if you kept it open!"

"Sacre, oui! I believe you; but they were caught in a trap, you see, for there was no wind, and the tide was against

them, whilst the boats from the town, full of soldiers, and an armed lugger, and the guns of the fort opened on them, and so the vessel was retaken, and the English Captain, Monsieur Got-dam, and his crew were taken prisoners and sent to Paris."

"Were all the officers taken," said Julian, "and sent to Paris?"

"No, there's some obscurity about the rest of the affair," said the gendarme. "The captain and a midshipman only were sent to Paris. It seems Captain Pierre Gaudet made prisoner of one of the officers of the frigate—a regular diable—who shot his brother-in-law, he says, and took his schooner, so he thought he had a right to this prisoner himself. So he fastened him and a sailor taken with him down in the cabin of the Vengeance, and in the evening came ashore leaving five or six men in the lugger. Sacre! would you believe it? but this tonnerre de diable of an Englishman got loose with his man, and actually sliced the gizzards of the five men on board, and ran off with the Vengeance."

"Mon Dieu!" said Julian, greatly interested, for he was now learning something about Sir Oscar de Bracy, "those two men were diables!"

"Corbleu! you will say so when you hear the end. The next day news reached Havre that the Vengeance had caught fire, and was run ashore near here under Lyon point, and burnt to the water's edge."

"You surprise me, Monsieur le Sergeant," said Julian. "Then what became of lieutenant——"

"Lieutenant!" said the gendarme. "I said nothing about a lieutenant."

"He must have been a lieutenant," said Julian, quite determinedly; "the lieutenant always accompanies his captain on an expedition of that kind."

"Well, perhaps so," said the Sergeant; "you are a sailor—I am not."

"Yes, that's true," said Julian. "I was mate of a fine brig, and young as I am I have seen a good deal of service. But what became of those Englishmen that got the Vengeance under weigh, and took her out? If she caught fire, they must either have been burnt in her, drowned, or got on shore."

"Well, mon garçon," returned the gendarme, "there's a deal of mystery about those two dare-devils. Some say they were surely drowned, for no man will stay to be burnt that can escape that death by drowning. Neither modes of going out of the world are pleasant," and the sergeant and his companion got up, having finished their wine. "But some of the country people who were attracted to the top of the cliff by the burning lugger swear they saw two figures on board when she struck,

and that they threw themselves out of her; but when daylight came there were no signs of them. Myself and comrade here, when we heard of the affair, traversed all about the coast, but could get no trace of strangers; so I fancy they only threw themselves overboard to be drowned, and the tide washed back their bodies out to sea. By the way," added the Sergeant, "have you got your papers with you?"

"Oh, yes," returned Julian, taking out Louis Lebeau's pocket-book; "here they are, all right."

"All right—all right," said the Sergeant, without taking them. "Don't trouble yourself, but take my advice, and join Captain Pierre Gaudet's privateer; he's a lucky man, though he did get his lugger half burnt."

"Bon jour, Dame Moret," continued the Sergeant. "I shall take a walk across the fields to the old château; good day, and many thanks."

"You are heartily welcome, Monsieur le Sergeant," returned the dame. "You know you will always find a bottle of good wine here; so bon jour;" and the gendarmes departed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ON the day that Julian Arden landed from the *Onyx*, Lieutenant Thornton, Mademoiselle de Tourville, and her friend Julia Plessis having made arrangements for a day's excursion, proceeded to visit a place long celebrated in that part of the country, and known as the Hermit's Grotto.

This hermitage was not more than a couple of miles from the Château Coulancourt, and was reached by traversing a road leading through a picturesque country.

The tradition that rendered this grotto celebrated was that for nearly one hundred years it was the residence of a holy man, who had subsisted principally on the water from the well, that rose within the grotto, and said to possess peculiar properties. In fact, there is scarcely a rural village of France that has not its legend of a holy man, or hermit, dwelling in the neighbourhood; but one remaining in the same place a hundred years seemed marvellous; for, even allowing that he commenced his holy life at the age of twenty, the worthy recluse must have been of a very respectable age when he departed from earth, and a desire would have arisen in the minds of the young people to make a pilgrimage to such a hallowed spot had not Mademoiselle Plessis declared that the scenery in the vicinity of the grotto was exceedingly beautiful, and talked enthusiasti-

cally of the cascade, piles of curious rocks, and a spot like the Perte du Rhone, near Geneva, where the little river entirely disappeared, and then came sparkling and dashing out of the rocks, some hundred yards from where it had been lost to view.

Monsieur Plessis had gone to Havre, for Madame de Coulancourt's letter had not yet arrived, though many days after the expected time, and Jean Plessis became uneasy. Our hero was not, because he was fairly, irrevocably in love, a love that absorbed his whole thoughts and actions, and he no longer talked of making his escape. The glory of naval achievements, once his pride and only thought, faded like rose leaves, and were wafted away, as Cupid shook his tiny pinions over his victim, encircling him with his invisible but most secure meshes.

Shall we attempt to probe the heart of the fascinating and lively Marie de Tourville? Had she become aware of her lover's devotion? We only ask our fair readers, did they ever mistake a man's love when declared by his eyes, his actions, by anything but words? Did they ever mistake that devotion for friendship?

All we can say is, Marie de Tourville was not blind; she knew that she was loved, and she gloried in it, though it seemed a strange contradiction for one so sweetly modest and retiring to declare to her friend, that the dearest object of her life was obtained when she gained the love of William Thornton. Neither did this declaration shock the pretty Julia, who laughed as she kissed the crimsoned cheek of the beautiful girl, saying—

"You see, dearest, that for once, your giddy friend prophesied rightly; and in overcoming your timid reluctance, she may have aided to ensure your future happiness."

In this instance Cupid played no game of cross purposes. If Lieutenant Thornton fondly loved, he was no lover in vain, for the gentle heart of Marie de Tourville beat in unison with his.

It was a lovely day in June, the one chosen for the excursion; and, though it is hotter in Normandy during that month than with us, who are sometimes content to warm ourselves with a good fire, when June, as Master *Punch* says, sets in with its usual severity, yet the heat was tempered by a delicious fresh westerly wind, and a succession of light gossamer clouds, that somewhat softened the glowing hue of a Norman sky, which, though not of the glorious colour of the Italian firmament, is yet intensely blue when compared with the canopy heaven spreads over the bright green fields of merry England.

Bill Saunders followed the young couple at a little distance,

carrying a basket, containing some light refreshment to be partaken of in the grotto. Bill had grown very philosophical; he found the life he led an easy one, rather too much so, for he would willingly have exerted his tongue more than he did, but he made poor progress in the language, though the females of the establishment, who liked the good-tempered and very good-looking seaman, took considerable pains to teach him. However, Bill smoked his pipe in the yard, helped the old gardener in his rough work, and as the old man had been deaf and dumb for the last two years of his life, they got on remarkably well; that is, they both made signs and nodded their heads, and remained quite satisfied as if they each understood the other. Bill had instructions from his master, as he would style Lieutenant Thornton, that if ever he came in the way of a stranger, to pretend that he was deaf and dumb, and hitherto he had managed to act his part well; but this day his discretion was to be put to a severer test.

Our hero and his fair companions rambled on through the very pretty country surrounding the château, conversing on various and numerous subjects. Sometimes he would climb a rock to gather some wild flower, to give to Mademoiselle de Tourville, and receive in return a smile and a glance of pleasure from her large dark eyes that strangely confused his brain.

"You remind me, in some respects," he once remarked, "of little Mabel Coulaucourt; so much so, that I get quite bewildered with the resemblance; it is in the eyes, I fancy."

"But why, Monsieur Thornton," said Julia Plessis, laughing, "do you always call Mademoiselle Coulaucourt 'little Mabel?' surely she is not a dwarf."

Marie de Tourville looked with a peculiar smile into the lieutenant's eyes.

"Dwarf," he repeated, "oh, no; I daresay she may be a tall elegant girl. But somehow she always appears before my eyes as the dear, engaging, tender-hearted child, with her thin, pale face, so expressive of all the sufferings she had gone through; and then the pleading look of her large lustrous eyes. I would have sacrificed my boyish life for her; and God knows I would do so now, as for a fondly loved sister."

The lieutenant looked up as he spoke, and Marie de Tourville turned aside her head as if gazing round her; he fancied that her eyes filled with tears.

"This is very strange," thought our hero, "I have observed this emotion before; indeed, it is always obvious whenever we speak of Mabel Coulaucourt."

"It is a great pity, Monsieur Thornton," observed Julia Plessis, with a very demure and serious look, "that you have not been faithful to your fair protégée; instead of loving her as

a sister, you ought to have given and kept for her your fondest affection—the affection of a lover.”

“You forget, fair Julia,” replied our hero, somewhat seriously, “that when we parted Mabel was but a child. What might have been my feelings in after years, had circumstances thrown us together, who can say? The human heart is a strange piece of mechanism; we can with difficulty control or command its impulses.”

“And yet,” said Marie de Tourville, in a low and somewhat agitated voice, “gratitude has a strange power over woman’s heart; who can say but that the child you describe as so precocious and sensitive, may not have grown into womanhood with a deep and overpowering feeling, gradually increasing with increased sensibility, till that one feeling has become the engrossing one of her whole heart, staking her happiness on earth on its being returned?”

William Thornton started, and a flush rose to his cheeks as he sought to gaze into the expressive features of his companion, whose eyes sought the ground. He felt uneasy, he knew not why, till Julia, with a light, merry laugh, said gaily—

“Come, we have had quite enough of Master Cupid, and his supposed capabilities of making people miserable or happy, as the case may be. I know for my part the little wretch shall take the bandage off his own eyes before he blinds mine, for I verily declare I consider all people in love nothing more than a set of poor deluded mortals—moths about a flame. Now turn, both of you and look at this view, there’s the grotto and the rocks of Menin; and there, about two miles off, on that high bank with the noble forest behind it, stands the château of the Monsieur or Captain Gramont my father was speaking about the other day.”

“I had no idea of seeing any spot half so picturesque and lovely,” cried Marie, rousing from the reverie she seemed plunged in; and gazing into the lieutenant’s face with such a look of confiding affection, that had they been alone he would have thrown himself at her feet, and avowed that love so plainly shown by every look and action; that devotion, which, no matter whether alone or in the presence of Madame Plessis and her daughter, he made no effort to conceal. He had been told she was an orphan, and going to England with the intention of trusting to her talents for support. Then what was to hinder him from loving her and throwing himself at her feet? his heart told him she would not scorn his affection, every difficulty therefore vanished. Where is the difficulty that will not disappear before a lover, satisfied of his fair one’s faith and truth?

The scenery would have been unnoticed but for Julia’s call

on his attention. Politeness compelled him to rouse himself, and looking around he declared that Julia's previous description—a description that had called up his wish to view the Hermit's Grotto—was exceeded by the reality. It certainly was a glowing and charming picture. The path on which they were standing was apparently intercepted by a range of extremely picturesque rocks of immense size, looking like detached masses piled one upon another. The recesses were covered with an infinite variety of parasite plants, mosses, and flowering shrubs, and the summits covered with groups of stunted pines. Through the heart of this singular barrier of rocks, nearly half a mile in length, the trout stream rushed with considerable violence, falling a height of above thirty feet, in one broad sheet, into a beautiful pool of deep pellucid water, more than a thousand feet in circumference. The stream then fell over a low range of rock, and pursued its course, tumbling and foaming over detached rocks, till it reached a level track running through some rich pasture meadows.

Close beside the pool, and seemingly scooped out of the rock, was the grotto, its sides covered with the luxuriant foliage of the wild fig, whilst from the top hung festoons of the flowery jessamine, which grew in wild profusion over the rocks.

"I do not wonder," said Lieutenant Thornton, "that the good hermit lived to a good old age in this charming spot."

"Do you think you could live here a quarter that period, Monsieur de Tourville?" inquired Julia, laughing.

"Oh, yes, with a fair saint like yourself on the opposite side of the pool to give life and beauty to the scene."

"And to help to fry the trout you would catch in the said pool," returned the lively girl, trying to climb a rock for a beautiful wild rose.

Thornton and Marie de Tourville strolled into the grotto, leaving Julia collecting a wild nosegay, whilst Bill, having deposited the basket, scrambled up the rocks to see what was on the other side.

Marie de Tourville sat down on the stone bench hewn out of the rock, either by the pious hermit or some hermit-loving disciple, and her companion placed himself beside her.

"If ever a hermit lived here," observed the young girl, looking around, "surely he must have had some other place of repose than this open grotto; you see it is of no extent, and in winter the blasts up the valley must have been piercing."

"Depend on it, the holy father took care of himself," returned our hero; "at all events, if he lived here a hundred years he was blessed with a most excellent constitution."

"You seem to have no faith in the piety of monks and hermits," observed Marie, with a smile.

"Not much, I confess," said our hero; "it requires to be a good Catholic to hear, see, and believe all we are told of their self-denial."

"Yet, you may be mistaken; you are aware I was reared a Protestant. Still I do not see that we have any right to doubt the piety of others, trusting chiefly to our biassed history of their lives and doings."

"I would not argue the point with so dangerous and so fair an antagonist," said the Lieutenant, "I would rather," he added, with a look of devoted affection, "plead my own cause," and he laid his hand gently upon the fair and beautiful fingers that trembled at his touch, but were not drawn away. "It is needless for me to say that with my whole heart and soul I love you, Marie, for you must have read my affection before now. A strange and incomprehensible feeling drew me towards you the very first moment that we met; I call it strange, because when I gaze into your features an inexplicable idea rushes through my brain, a confusion of thoughts impossible to disentangle. But one feeling, however, struggles through the mist, and that is, that I adore you, and that to remain longer silent is impossible." The hand he held trembled exceedingly as he added, "Beloved, my heart has dared to whisper that I am not wholly indifferent to you. One word, Marie, from your lips decides my fate."

He drew her gently towards him, and raising her eyes to his—they were full of tears—she said in a low sweet voice, and speaking, to his utter amazement, in English—

"Is it possible, William, you never recognised little Mabel?"

The blood rushed to William Thornton's heart with overwhelming force, as with an uncontrollable emotion he caught her to his heart, exclaiming—

"My God! how grateful am I! The one painful feeling of my life is scattered to the winds. Oh, Mabel! Mabel! Can you still love me as I adore you?"

"Dear William, why doubt poor Mabel's love? How it has grown with my growth! It has been my pride and my joy that my happiness was centred in you."

"Ah! and yet," uttered the Lieutenant, in a tone of bitter self-reproach, "I apparently loved another."

"No, William, you loved Mabel. In the midst of your love for Marie, Mabel was flitting before your mind's eye, the pale, thin, careworn face of the child you protected was still struggling for a place in your heart—confess it."

"Mabel, you are an angel," and pressing her to his heart he fondly kissed her cheek.

A shadow crossed the grotto's mouth, and Julia Plessis entered laughing, saying—

"Well, upon my word, strange things do occur in this world. I left you, monsieur, with a woman, and lo! I hear you say she's an angel; never after this doubt the holiness of the Hermit's Grotto."

Before another word could be said a darker shadow crossed the grotto's mouth, and caused the three absorbed inmates to start to their feet. The tall form of a man, with a fishing rod in his hand and a basket at his back, stood before them, and at a glance Lieutenant Thornton recognised Captain Gramont.

Raising his hat from his head, the Frenchman bowed with the utmost courtesy, saying—

"Pardon me, ladies, and you Monsieur de Tourville, for this intrusion; it was quite unintentional. I was crossing the rocks towards the stream on the other side to try and tempt a large trout out of this famous pool, when I encountered a rather strange individual. I spoke to him, but he looked at me as if I were a wild beast, shook his head, and made a horrid noise in his throat."

"Ah!" interrupted our hero, inclined to laugh, though exceedingly annoyed at the interruption, "you met my man, Pierre Bompert; he is deaf and dumb, but as faithful a fellow as ever lived."

There was a curl on Monsieur Gramont's lip as he bowed; and as all left the grotto, he observed—

"I have no doubt of his fidelity, for he seemed decidedly inclined to throw me over the rocks, and I really did not offend him. But I have to beg your pardon, Monsieur de Tourville, for not having called at Coulancourt. I have been absent. The Government has made me Maire of this arrondissement, and I had to proceed to Rouen; but I had intended doing myself that honour to-morrow."

Our hero bowed, and as he could do no less, and politeness required it, he introduced the two ladies to the unwelcome intruder.

Monsieur Gramont could scarcely conceal his admiration as he acknowledged the introduction to Mademoiselle de Tourville, but to Mademoiselle Plessis he said in a gay tone—

"Though I have not had the pleasure of an introduction before, I have had the happiness of seeing Mademoiselle Plessis."

"The happiness was entirely confined to yourself, monsieur," said Julia, carelessly, "for I really never remember having anywhere seen you."

"I could recall the period, nevertheless, mademoiselle, but it is a painful time to bring back to your memory; you were a very young girl."

Julia did look surprised, and a little uneasy, and perhaps curious, for she said—

"Pray to what time do you refer, monsieur? You know our sex are always accounted curious, so I suppose I am like all the rest."

"If all were like you, mademoiselle," said Monsieur Gramont, with a flattering smile, "this would be a dangerous world for our sex; but the period I refer to was shortly after the taking of Lyons, when Collet d'Herbois, Fouché, and Montait had formed a military commission there."

"Ah! mon Dieu!" exclaimed Julia Plessis, with a start of horror.

And Mabel's cheek turned deadly pale, whilst Lieutenant Thornton gazed, with a frown on his brow, at the unconcerned features of the Frenchman.

"Mon Dieu! were you there with those wretches?"

"I was a lieutenant in the Chasseurs, mademoiselle, and doing my duty under the orders of General Ronsin. I had no share in the horrors there committed; those men have since received a merited doom for their atrocities; but I was struck at the time, mademoiselle, by the noble devotion of your father and family in the cause of the beautiful and then unfortunate Duchesse de Coulangcourt."

Mabel felt intensely uneasy, for as she raised her eyes, she thought, or she fancied, the eyes of Monsieur Gramont rested upon her with a peculiar look. In a low voice she said to Lieutenant Thornton—

"Let us go back to the château."

"Well, Monsieur Gramont," cried our hero, "we will not interrupt you in your sport; there are some clouds overhead, and a fine breeze curls the surface of yonder deep pool, both prognostics in your favour."

The two maidens saluted the Frenchman, who remained uncovered until they turned to depart, and then he said—

"Since I have been so fortunate in making such agreeable and charming acquaintance, I will eagerly avail myself of my good fortune."

The party then began retracing their steps, and Bill, from his station, seeing them retiring, rose up; he was quietly smoking his pipe, eyeing all the movements of Monsieur Gramont, for whom he had imbibed a most inconceivable dislike from the very first day of their meeting, and hearing his master say he did not like that Monsieur Gramont, Bill doubly disliked him. He, however, had no dislike for the Frenchwomen; the men, he declared, were born his natural enemies, and the only one he was likely to be reconciled to was the old deaf gardener; but Monsieur Gramont was a tall, handsome

man, with whom he felt a monstrous desire to pick a quarrel. The party going away without refreshment, and in which he considered he would have shared after they had finished, was caused by Monsieur Gramont's intrusion, and this made Bill grumble.

He was descending the rocks, and was passing the Frenchman to get his basket, when Monsieur Gramont, unfolding his rod and landing net, turned suddenly round, and looking into Bill's honest face, said, pointing to the net—

"Hold this a moment, my man, and I'll thank you."

Bill started back as if a thirty-two pound shot had made an attempt to pass between his legs, for the Frenchman spoke in unmistakable English. Bill was taken aback, and he at once replied—

"I'll see you — first."

But immediately recollecting his dumb character, and seeing his master waving his hand for him to come on, he glared at the cool, and collected, and smiling Frenchman, and uttered such a succession of unearthly sounds, that any one else would have been confounded; and then, with a look of unmistakable rage at Monsieur Gramont, he seized his basket, clenched his huge fist, and departed, whilst the Frenchman kept quietly putting his rod together, singing "Malbrook," and other French airs.

"Well, blow me," muttered Bill, "if I wouldn't give twelve months' pay to thrust my fist into that crapaud's mouth! I'd spoil the beauty of his Moll Brook, the cursed frog-eating lubber! speaking English too, thinking to take me in. Ay, ay; sink me if it is not enough to capsize a fellow under bare poles."

Thus grumbling and growling, and rather afraid his master would think he had not acted his part well, and, on reflecting, deeply regretting that he had not thrown Frenchman, rod, and all into the pool, he hurried on after the party.

As our hero and his fair companions proceeded towards the château, the conversation naturally turned upon the discovery which had just been made of Marie de Tourville being no other than Mabel Arden.

"And is it possible, monsieur," said Julia Plessis, "that your heart never suggested the idea that Marie and Mabel were one and the same person? Was there no trace of the thin, pale girl left in the sweet face of my beloved friend to recall the past?"

"Yes," replied the young man, gazing with fond delight upon the beautiful and happy girl who leaned upon his arm so confidently. "Yes, the child's image constantly haunted me; sleeping or waking the two faces appeared before me. It seemed

to me as if I was loving both ; I was most completely bewildered. Still, I really never for a moment thought it possible they could be one and the same ; that idea never entered my head at all. It is true, Marie's eyes always reminded me of Mabel's ; and I often in fancy pictured to myself my little protégée grown into just such another lovable being as Marie, and I continually tormented myself as to whether Mabel would ever remember me as anything but a brother, if I had kept my affections free."

"Ah, the fact is, I was always quite right," said Julia, laughing ; "love is blind, and lovers infatuated."

"But your time will come, fair Julia," suggested the lieutenant.

"Eh, bien !" returned the lovely girl. "I will then beseech the saints to grant me patience, strengthen my digestion, and make me love a rational creature. But, badinage apart, I can't endure that Monsieur Gramont ; he says he had no share in the horrors committed at Lyons. I do not believe him ; he belonged to the army of the ferocious Ronsin, and that's enough to stamp his character in my mind. I wonder he had the face to acknowledge he was one of the monsters that so disgraced God's own image."

"Like you, Julia," said Mabel, with a shudder, "I feel a kind of apprehension steal over me when I think of that man ; indeed, I thought he looked at me with a strange inquiring expression. However, after all, it was perhaps mere fancy on my part."

"Now, dearest," interrupted our hero, addressing Mabel, "pray explain to me the singular and extraordinary circumstance of your being here, when I thought you were far away in Old England. It appears so unaccountable."

"And yet," returned Mabel, "most easily explained, and will appear very simple and natural, when you hear my explanation. From the moment I became aware that my beloved mother was alive and well and residing in Paris, an overpowering desire to fly to her arms took possession of me ; I could not rest night or day—I could think of nothing else. Amongst the French refugees, acquaintances of Madame Volney's, was a Madame de Fourville, whose family consisted of a son and daughter ; their resources were very limited, and just at this time they received letters from an uncle, who was in power, and high in the French Directory. He urged their return to France, *via* Hamburg, with every hope of some of their estates being restored, on their taking the oath not to emigrate.

"They immediately resolved to return to their country. Madame Volney, knowing my intense desire to rejoin my parents, and participating in the feeling, and also knowing how necessary it was that I should procure proofs of my birth and

my mother's marriage, easily prevailed on Madame de Tourville to take me with her, as her daughter's French attendant—her late one had refused to go back to France. Accordingly, we embarked for Hamburg, and the necessary papers being sent us by Madame de Tourville's uncle, we travelled safely to Paris.

"Need I describe the joy and rapture of my beloved mother? I will pass over many things now for the sake of brevity. It was necessary that I should continue to represent Janette Brusset, the attendant of Madame Tourville; so I remained with Madame Plessis and my dear Julia, the beloved companion of my childhood, visiting my dear and still beautiful mother daily, and occasionally staying several days and nights as if in attendance on her. My mother's ardent, burning desire is to get from France, and return to her own country.

"When I explained to her that my uncle had left me so noble a fortune, and that you were her brother's son, she told me she had heard all that, and that Jean Plessis was even then seeking the necessary documents to establish her marriage and my poor lamented brother Julian's birth. Afterwards came your letter, inclosed in one from good Dame Moret's son to Jean Plessis, who had just returned. Imagine our joy, though still our anxiety.

"Then it was that Julia proposed that I should accompany her and her father and mother to Coulancourt, as Mademoiselle de Tourville. Ah, William—I still call you William"—our hero pressed the little hand resting on his arm—"I was easily persuaded to practise this ruse upon you, to see if you still remembered the 'little pale, thin child' that clung to you years back, as her only hope; and so good Monsieur Plessis, who had an eye to your escape out of France, and to guard you from imprisonment, whilst in it, by bribery, procured papers for Monsieur Philip and Mademoiselle Marie de Tourville, so that if you attracted notice you might pass for my brother; after arranging this plan, it struck my mother that she might also get out of France, but Jean Plessis over-persuaded her for the present, as it might prove our destruction, and at one sweep confiscate all her property. My dear mother cared not for the estates, she so longed to quit France; but then she knew she might involve good Monsieur Plessis, whose attachment and noble generosity had caused him so often to risk his life for her and her late husband, so she consented to my coming here. 'And perhaps,' suggested Monsieur Plessis, 'by a little manoeuvring you may, madame, be able to visit Coulancourt yourself.' This idea delighted my mother, for she longs to see and embrace you.

"So now, dear William, it is I that have to ask your pardon for thinking to steal your heart from little Mabel."

Young hearts—young hearts—how few and simple are the words from the lips beloved that constitute the felicity! We know not the delights in the years that follow.

As they approached the château, walking up from the bottom of the lawn, they beheld Rose Moret running from the front door to meet them.

"What can cause Rose to hurry so?" exclaimed Mabel—we will drop her assumed name; but Rose was up with them before they could surmise, or utter a conjecture. She looked like a full-blown peony, her cheeks were so flushed.

"Why, Rose, you are out of breath," said Julia; "anything wrong?"

"Well, indeed, mademoiselle, perhaps what I have to tell you may not be pleasant; but mother told me to run and take the short cut, and to tell you that Sergeant François Perrin and another gendarme are coming to the château on a visit of inspection; but do not be alarmed, for it is only a matter of form."

Mabel at first turned pale, and clung with a feeling of alarm to her companion, but Julia Plessis re-assured her by saying—

"Do not trouble about Sergeant Perrin; we are old acquaintances. I can very easily manage him, so trust to me."

Rose then turned to Lieutenant Thornton, saying—

"Monsieur, there is a young man, a sailor, apparently—he says his name is Louis Lebeau—waiting for you under the great chestnut tree at the back of the garden."

"Louis Lebeau," repeated our hero, "I never heard the name before, to the best of my recollection; but pray, Rose, say I will join him there in a few minutes. I wish to speak to Saunders, for he had better keep out of the way, provided the sergeant does not inquire after him."

"Do you think there is anything to fear from this visit, William?" asked Mabel, anxiously, looking into her lover's face.

"No, Mabel, I do not think there is the slightest cause for apprehension; these kind of visits are common in France; a mere ceremony that must be gone through. Monsieur Plessis has had our papers so carefully prepared, that suspicion cannot be excited."

By this time they had reached the house, and whilst the females went in, the young man turned back to have a word with Bill.

"I trust, Bill, you did not utter a syllable when that Frenchman spoke to you on the rocks."

"Not one," replied Bill; "I gave a kind of grunt, like a well-bred porker, when he feels the knife in him, and then Mounseer stared at me, as if I was a whale or a porpoise sport-

ing over land, and says he, 'Parley voo, garron;' by my conscience, I had a mind to give him a flip in the head, for calling me a garron."

"He did not call you a garron; he, no doubt, said garçon."

"Well, sir, they are much the same, seeing I don't know what that word is."

Then Bill hesitated a little; then looking up and rubbing the back of his head, he continued—

"He speaks English, your honour."

"Speaks English!" repeated our hero, with a start. "How can you know that? you surely must have spoken to him."

Bill looked puzzled? he, however, said—

"No, your honour, I didn't speak to him. I was passing him by, you see, when he turns round, and says he, curse his impudence, 'Hold that, my man, and I'll thank you.' 'See you —— first,' says I."

"What!" exclaimed the Lieutenant, angrily, "you said that!"

"Not exactly," said Bill, fidgeting; "in course I meant it. I turns round, fills, and goes ahead; the Mounseer begins singing about some Moll Brook, and some other gibberish, and says I, 'I'd Moll Brook you, if I had ten minutes' play with you,' and so, your honour, I left him."

"Well," said Lieutenant Thornton, thoughtfully, "this is serious. However, what's done cannot be undone! you acted as well as I could expect: but now hear me, you had better keep out of the way: there are two gendarmes coming here, to make the usual examination of the papers of all strangers; so keep to your room unless I send for you."

Thus speaking, the lieutenant walked on, making a circuit of the house to enable him to reach the great chestnut tree at the back.

"Well, blow me, if this ain't a nice country to live in. Coming to look at our papers!" muttered Bill, "I wish we had the two lubbers on board the little Onyx—my eyes! wouldn't I paper them; howsomever, I will take this basket to my room, I suppose I'm not expected to fast because those beggars are coming."

Bill very quietly made his way to his room, shut the door, bolted it, and then began to examine the contents of the basket. In the meantime, our hero was by no means easy in his mind respecting Bill's rencontre with Monsieur Gramont; for on reflection it convinced him of two things—first, that the Frenchman doubted Bill's being deaf and dumb; and secondly, he must have suspected him to be an Englishman. This train of reflection made him exceedingly uncomfortable; he had now not only his

own safety to attend to, but the safety of one dearer to him than life.

He was roused from his uncomfortable thoughts by seeing the great chestnut tree before him, a tree considered almost sacred by the peasantry, from its great age, and several remarkable historical events connected with it; but as those events belong to the traditional history of Normandy, we will not interrupt the thread of our story by reciting them.

On looking under the spreading branches, he perceived a young man in a sailor's dress leaning against the huge trunk, but who immediately advanced towards him. Our hero looked at him with some surprise, for although vested in the attire of the French common sailor, there was an air of easy grace, and a gentlemanly bearing, that was noticeable at first sight. As the stranger halted close beside the lieutenant, there was a visible flush on his cheek as he said—

“It will not do to waste words—Sir Oscar de Bracy.”

The lieutenant started and gazed somewhat curiously into the features of the stranger, which appeared almost familiar to him, and being addressed in English, his surprise was the greater.

“No doubt you are astonished,” continued the false Lebeau, “but I had better inform you who I am at once—I am Julian Arden.”

“Heavens! is this possible?” exclaimed the astonished listener, grasping the speaker's hand. “You Julian Arden, the lost and deeply-lamented brother of Mabel!”

“Such in truth is the case,” returned Julian, warmly pressing the hand that held his.

“I have no doubt of it,” interrupted the amazed lieutenant, “your features so resemble your sister's; but, in the name of fate, how knew you me, or that I was here? There is joyful news in store for you—your mother and sister both live.”

“Yes, yes,” returned the young man, “I know all that, and more than you imagine; perhaps, I have news also for you.”

“Still, Julian,” said Lieutenant Thornton, addressing him as he would a brother, “you cannot surely know that Mabel is here, in the old château.”

“Ah, that is news, indeed,” joyfully exclaimed Julian Arden, “and amply repays the years of privation, and at times suffering, that I have endured. I was aware of my beloved mother being alive and well, and in Paris; but Mabel I thought was in England—her being here amazes me. Aware that she owes her preservation and future happiness to your care and noble generosity, I longed to see you before I proceeded to seek my mother.”

“Had we not better proceed to the house?” said William Thornton; “we have so much to explain and to say; but I will first break this joyful intelligence to Mabel.”

"No," said Julian, "I dare not venture there till night, after the visit of François Perrin, and the inspecting gendarmes. In my joy at meeting you, I have delayed speaking of him; I was with Dame Moret when he came to her house, stating that he was going to visit the château, and as she had informed me that you were here, she wished you to be put upon your guard. Rose Moret went on before me, so now you had better go back to the house. I will return to Dame Moret till dark, and then come here, and you can hide me for a few days, till we are enabled to talk over our position and future proceedings; after which I intend journeying to Paris. I have papers as Louis Lebeau, of Rouen, and can more readily than any Englishman pass for a French sailor, as you will be able to judge when you hear my story."

Rose Moret interrupted their further conversation, by hurrying towards them. "The gendarmes are come, monsieur, and Mademoiselle Plessis is anxious you should see them; it will remove all suspicion, though she does not think they have any."

"Very good," said Lieutenant Thornton, "I will see them; but, Rose, you must contrive to keep Pierre Bompert out of the way."

"There's no fear of him, monsieur," returned Rose, laughing. "He has taken the basket with the lunch to his room, and locked himself in, grumbling a good deal, but really I have no idea about what, as there is enough in the basket to keep him a week."

"He is only lamenting, Rose, that he cannot knock the heads of the two gendarmes together; an amusement that would please him amazingly. Farewell, Julian; I shall most anxiously expect you, and you may be sure there is one that will be in a state of intense anxiety till she sees you."

"Farewell till to-night," replied Julian, "but for heaven's sake be cautious with those men, though Dame Moret said you spoke French very nearly like a native of the country, but of another province; and as the De Tourvilles were from Picardy, mind that, you will do very well."

So shaking hands, the young men, who already felt highly pleased with each other, parted.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WE must now follow the footsteps of Monsieur Gramont, who, having finished singing his air of "Malbrook," put up his fishing rod, gave a look after the retreating form of Bill Saunders, and burst into a self-satisfied laugh.

"So," said he to himself, "that big brute thinks he has deceived me, and that I am such a fool as to think him deaf and dumb. I knew he was an Englishman as well as his master Parbleu! I will have them all in a trap in a little while, and though the guillotine has gone out of fashion, I can still get them comfortable lodgings, and accomplish my projects at the same time. By-the-by, that girl is marvellously lovely—Mademoiselle de Tourville! Why he, an English naval officer, should pass for her brother is something curious. Take care, Monsieur Plessis, take care, you may be getting your head into an awkward place some of these days, with all your astuteness."

Having fastened his rod together, he commenced crossing the rocks, through which the river found a passage, by a sort of path used by the country people. Having arrived at the other side where the river disappeared, and where a good bridle road led along the side of the stream to a stone bridge, about half a mile distant, he applied a whistle to his lips, and immediately a man, leading two saddle horses, came out from the thick plantation bordering one side of the road.

"Oh," mentally exclaimed Monsieur Gramont, "he had patience to wait, though I told him I might not return this way at all," and then he descended to the road.

The man holding the two horses was a somewhat remarkable looking personage. In years he was rather over than under fifty, with a thick grizzled beard, immense bushy eyebrows, with small deep sunk grey eyes, having a most sinister if not ferocious expression. He was of middle height, rather short than otherwise, and as he walked forward on the road he jerked his shoulders up and down in a most peculiar manner. He was attired similarly to Monsieur Gramont, only instead of a cap he wore a hat, pushed well down on his forehead.

"You had the patience to wait the chance of my return, Augustine," said Monsieur Gramont, and he joined the man holding the horse.

"Ma foi, oui," said the person named Augustine, in a gruff, harsh voice, "I might as well ruminate here two or three hours as do so at the château; so as I thought it possible you might return, I waited. Did you see them?"

"I did," said Monsieur Gramont, "but I saw that my presence was anything but welcome, so I let them return to Coulancourt, without forcing my company on them; but let us mount—we can talk as we ride."

Having mounted, they rode on at a slow pace towards the bridge.

"Had you any opportunity of testing my opinion respecting that Monsieur de Tourville? He is no more a Frenchman than I am a Dutchman," questioned Monsieur Gramont's companion.

"I am quite satisfied he is an Englishman," returned Monsieur Gramont, "and so is that big fellow that wants to pass for a dummy. I tried the fellow with a sentence of English, holding my landing-net to him, and he started back as if something had exploded under his nose; he looked as if he could have swallowed me."

"Curse him and his master to boot. If they had not been in the way, we should have performed our job in first-rate style, and got possession of all those papers. Besides, that ruffian when he put the landing-net over my head, pulled it back with such tremendous force against my throat, that I doubt if ever I shall recover the power of swallowing; every time I eat it jolts my whole body, and gives me great pain. I'll cut his windpipe for that yet."

"He certainly made a very ingenious weapon of his landing-net. I was watching the whole proceeding from the thicket on the river's bank, and must say they managed to kil two of your comrades and make the rest take to flight in a masterly manner. The master is a very powerful young man."

"Nevertheless," returned the man named Augustine, savagely, "I should have had my knife in his heart, but for that villain with the landing-net. Curse him, he kicked me over afterwards, saying something in a strange language, which I afterwards recollected must be English. Why the fellow let me go I cannot imagine."

"Neither can I," replied De Gramont, "when I saw you run off, I turned back to the river, and picked up the stranger's fishing-rod, and caught a fine trout, which was taking the world easy under the bank with a red hackle in his gills. I bagged several others, waiting till the owner came back for his rod, hoping to pick some kind of intelligence out of him in order to discover what he thought of the attack upon Monsieur Plessis and family; but that beautiful girl getting away and uttering the shriek she did ruined all—it reached the stranger's ears."

"That was a bungling affair of one of the men," said Augustine; "she sprang out of the carriage at the opposite door, and would have got off into the wood, only I sent Jacques after her; the Englishman then came up and ran him through the body, though Jacques fired his pistol full in his face."

"Well, it's no use our talking this matter over again; the project failed and there's an end of it. The only thing to be feared was Jean Plessis being able to discover any of the robbers, as they were considered; but to my surprise, he appeared very glad to hush up the affair, and let it be thought that the fellows were a remnant of the Chouans band, that committed so many outrages here two years ago; and the terribly disturbed state of all the roads and districts of France at this moment,

with brigands and robbers of all kinds, caused the affair to be thought lightly of, and no search, except by the peasantry, was made after the fugitives."

"No fear of their tracing them," said Augustine, "my comrades understood, if the thing failed, they were to make their way into Brittany as fast as they could, so I had no apprehension on that account. I confess I thought it was all up when that villain of an Englishman had me in his grasp—as well try and get out of a vice. But why not at once denounce them as spies, and get them arrested and sent to Paris?"

"No," returned Monsieur Gramont, "you are very short-sighted; you do not see the game I am playing. What good would it do me to lodge those two Englishmen in prison, and get Jean Plessis suspected? Would that pay off the mortgages on my property, regain me Coulancourt, or enable you to set up for yourself in another country? I have agreed to give you a certain sum, and get you safe out of France, for I tell you your party and Robespierre's are crushed for ever. People are sick of blood, and jacobinism is at a fearful discount. Your throat would be cut with frantic joy if you were caught in Paris. The reaction was immediate and overpowering; the name of a jacobin is held in abhorrence. Your famous associates, Fougquier, Rimaud, and Carrier, died amidst the howlings and shrieks of a multitude; all they wanted was yourself to make up a handsome quartette."

"You are cursed pleasant in your recollections," growled Augustine. "You seem to forget that it was I who forged the papers and accusations that got your father the estate of Coulancourt."

"Oh dear, no," returned Monsieur Gramont, laughing. "My memory is very good. I had nothing to do in that affair at all; I was never a jacobin. I really cannot say I delight in those extremes. If I can accomplish my ends without blood it is far preferable. You see the escape of the *ci-devant* Duchesse de Coulancourt through the agency of Jean Plessis, and her reappearance in Paris, and fortunate trial just after the fall of Robespierre, when a violent reaction was taking place, lost me the property. Now I want to regain the estate, at all events, which, having once possessed, I consider justly to be mine; but I do not want to get Madame Coulancourt's head off. If I prove that she is corresponding with England, where her daughter is, and that she and Jean Plessis, are seeking to secretly dispose of her property and transport the produce to Hamburg, I shall gain my ends. I have my spies on her continually, and lately I have reason to suspect that a young girl said to be very beautiful, and who is constantly visiting her, whom she has been seen to embrace with much affection, is her daughter, smuggled into

France some way or other. My next letters from Paris will be important."

There was a short silence, after which Monsieur Gramont's companion said—

"Are you certain that this very beautiful girl with Jean Plessis, calling herself Tourville, is really a Mademoiselle Tourville, and this Englishman passing for her brother is not her lover?"

"Of that I am quite certain; I saw and heard enough when I came suddenly upon them in the Hermit's Grotto. Lovers they are, but as to her being Mademoiselle Tourville or not I cannot say. I have ordered François Perrin to proceed to the château and make a visit of inspection without hinting any suspicion. He will be with me to-night to report."

"Well, it strikes me," said Augustine, "that this Mademoiselle de Tourville is Madame Coulancourt's daughter, sent from Paris, fearing she might be suspected."

Monsieur Gramont looked at his companion, saying—

"You have been receiving private communications from Paris, during your absence?"

"I have; and desperate as you think the cause of the jacobins, I have another idea."

"And who is your correspondent?" demanded Monsieur Gramont, somewhat authoritatively.

"A man who will soon revive the power of the terrorists (another name for jacobins)—Babouf, who is now styled the tribune of the people; he will restore the 'true, pure, and absolute democracy.'"

"Bah!" muttered Monsieur Gramont. "I tell you what, Augustine Vadier, you will bring your head under the axe; to believe or think that a rascally scribbler of a paltry paper, who reproduces the discarded theories of that little villain Muret, will again overturn the present consolidated form of government, under which our armies are achieving the most triumphant success! Bah! It is the army that will govern by and by."

"By heaven, I do believe you are no better than an aristocrat at heart—a loyalist!" said Augustine Vadier, savagely.

"No doubt in the world of it," returned Monsieur Gramont, quite coolly, "and always was; your republican principles and your ideas of liberty are all fudge. However, here we are, drop your political career, or you will lose your head. I never, out of all those I have seen, ever knew a man's carcass worth a *sous* without a head. So keep yours, follow my counsel, and I'll stick to my bargain, though you botched the beginning."

So saying Monsieur Gramont rode into the court-yard at the back of his château, an edifice of considerable importance

at one time, but at this period greatly out of repair, and sadly neglected. A domestic came to take the horses, and then followed Monsieur Gramont into the house, looking both gloomy and discontented.

Our readers will recollect that in one of the chapters we mentioned that Jean Plessis stated to our hero that he firmly believed that the casket Madame Coulaucourt confided to his care was plundered of its contents by a galley slave named Augustine Vadier, who afterwards played a very conspicuous part among the monsters of the revolution.

That Augustine Vadier and the Augustine Vadier above-mentioned are one and the same person, and it will be now necessary to lay before our readers an account of his connection with Monsieur Gramont.

Being committed to the galleys for his crimes, he was one of the two convicts left on board the hulk where our hero and Mabel passed so many hours, after escaping from the mob in the streets of Toulon. Augustine Vadier was in communication with the other slaves, and with some of the most vicious of the Toulon Republicans, and their emancipation was hourly expected. This man perceived the extreme care William Thornton bestowed upon the parcel he carried under his arm, and saw him deposit it at the foot of the berth in which Mabel reposed. His first intention was to possess himself of it altogether; but as he could not get out of the dock till the insurrection emancipated himself and companions, he resolved to have a look at it, and, watching his opportunity, he extracted the casket from the berth, and getting into a remote part of the hulk took off the cover. What was his astonishment when he recognised the casket itself as one sold by him several years back to the Duchess de Coulaucourt! and quite aware of its construction, in ten minutes, with a thin saw made from a watch spring, and one or two other tools he had hidden, he took out the bottom and all the contents, devouring with greedy eyes the valuable jewels and money it contained. Cutting up some pieces of lead he wrapped them in brown paper, and filling the spaces of the casket with shavings he restored the bottom, and putting the cover on, replaced it in the berth. Augustine Verrier's first impulse was to destroy the papers, but on looking at them he saw reason to think they might be of value hereafter.

On the galley slaves regaining their freedom, Vadier removed his plunder, and as he gained a position amongst the monsters brought into existence by the times, he placed the papers in greater security. Excelling in ingenuity, devilish in temper and disposition, he soon made himself notorious, and having the command of money from the sale of his jewels and gold, he soon became closely associated with the leaders of the jacobin mob.

Amongst the most violent and arrogant leaders of the party he joined was the elder Gramont, a man of high family but poor and eager for aggrandizement, who thought to gain his ends by siding with the ferocious and bloodthirsty followers of Marat, and afterwards with Robespierre.

Gramont and Vadier became amazingly friendly. In the course of time Gramont stated that he was connected by ties of blood with the *ci-devant* Duke de Coulancourt, that he aimed at getting into his hands the estates confiscated; and that if Vadier, who was a most accomplished forger, would aid him, he would make it well worth his while, and enrich him; for Vadier's extravagance equalled his love of blood. Struck with this proposal Vadier recollected the papers he had secreted in Toulon, and for them he went. Between them they forged several letters and a deed, purporting to annul the will the duke made, leaving his property to his duchess. In such a time of anarchy, confusion, and horror, they contrived to gain their ends, and the confiscated property of the Coulancourts was bestowed upon Monsieur Gramont; but the overthrow of Robespierre and his execution, and the destruction of all his partizans that could be caught, some time after, put Monsieur Gramont and Augustine Vadier to flight. Vadier was so execrated that he dared not shew himself any where near Paris; he contrived to get into Brittany, and joined the brigands, as they were then styled. A party he belonged to were forced to fly into Normandy; there he heard of Monsieur Gramont's son being still in possession of his father's property near Coulancourt; and as the son was well known to him, and knew of the manner in which he served his father, he discovered himself to him, and he gave him an asylum in his château. The pursuit after the partizans of Robespierre having relaxed, many had returned to Paris to foment fresh disturbances if they could; but Augustine Vadier, though he kept up a correspondence with several persons in the capital, was yet afraid to show himself.

Bertrand Gramont had just retired from the army, and through the interest of a near connection, then in power with the party governing France, was made maire of the arrondissement in which Coulancourt was situated. He was immensely in debt, his only remaining estate being mortgaged to the last acre, and, in fact, he was living on the emoluments of his office. Totally unprincipled, caring not a straw about the political state of the country, or minding much whether France became a republic or flourished under a monarchical government, though indeed he inclined to the latter, his only object was self-aggrandizement, and his grand project to recover Coulancourt. Augustine Vadier had irrevocably lost the papers he once possessed, for in his flight from Paris he lost everything. Bertrand Gra-

mont kept up a strict espionage upon Madame Coulancourt, his aim being to excite suspicion of her conduct, so that her estate of Coulancourt might be confiscated, he being assured that if that event ever occurred he should be able to get reinstated in the property.

With Augustine Vadier he planned the robbery of Jean Plessis, thinking to gain possession of important papers relative to the estate, and also some evidence of the intendant's proceedings respecting other property belonging to Madame Coulancourt.

Vadier brought into Normandy some eight or ten of his old associates, and kept them concealed till an opportunity should occur. Their vile projects were, however, defeated by the timely appearance of Lieutenant Thornton and Bill Saunders. Bertram Gramont was watching the whole proceeding, bitterly cursing the interference of our hero. In conversing with him afterwards respecting the fishing-rod he had picked up, his suspicions were excited by something in the manner and appearance of Lieutenant Thornton. He found no fault exactly with his French, for he spoke the language exceedingly well; but to a very keen observer like Bertram Gramont a trifle will lead to suspicion.

Suspicion once aroused, caused reflection, and not knowing any one in the vicinity of the name of De Tourville, he began making inquiries before he paid his promised visit to Coulancourt.

Vadier, who, at the time of the attack upon Jean Plessis, was without beard or whiskers, lay hid in Monsieur Gramont's château, till they grew, and he otherwise disguised himself. He declared to Bertram Gramont that the man who nearly choked him with the landing-net was positively an Englishman, for he had spoken English to him. He was sure it was English.

Monsieur Gramont thought this was very curious, so he rode over to Havre, and there he heard the full particulars of the attempt upon the Vengeance, and of her seizure afterwards by an English officer of the Diamond frigate and one man, and their taking her to sea; of her being burned, and then run ashore near or under Lyon Point; but what became of the English officer and his man, no one could say. Strongly desirous of finding some clue to the mystery, Bertram Gramont rode to the place where Captain Gaudet was repairing and refitting the Vengeance. He saw Pierre Gaudet, and questioned him concerning the naval officer and his man that took the privateer.

Captain Gaudet readily enough told him all he knew: that it was the same officer who had shot his brother-in-law, and took the Bon-Citoyen schooner; but he could not say what

became of him and his companion. He said, very likely that they were drowned; but Monsieur Gramont thought that it was not probable. He made the captain describe the two men minutely, and from his description he felt almost satisfied that Monsieur de Tourville and his servant, Pierre Bompert, were the English officer and his man. He at once set François Perrin, Sergeant of the Inspecting Gendarmes, to make all kind of inquiries, cautiously, so as not to excite suspicion. So well did the sergeant manage it, that he found out that two tall men, dressed as sailors, supposed to be French sailors, had crossed the sands to the village of Caux, on the morning after the burning wreck came ashore, and had been observed to enter the village, but were not seen after. More the sergeant could not learn; however, that was enough for Bertram Gramont. Giving the sergeant a handsome present, he desired him to remain quiet for awhile.

Bertram Gramont now felt satisfied he knew who Monsieur de Tourville was; but that by no means cleared up all the mystery of the affair to him. He was convinced there was a great deal more to be found out. He did not care about the arrest of the Englishmen; the finding them domiciled in Coulancourt, under the names of De Tourville and Bompert, was mysterious; but ten times more so when a Mademoiselle de Tourville arrived. He set a careful spy upon the movements of the inhabitants of Coulancourt; and as a guide, he ordered Sergeant Perrin to pay a visit to Dame Moret's, and also to the château; to excite no suspicion, but merely to perform his actual duty, inquiring the names, looking at their papers, &c., and then to come to him.

The spy brought him word that a party was going to the Hermit's Grotto on the following day; so, with Vadier, now much transmogrified by beard and whiskers and false eyebrows, he rode to the place, left Vadier with the horses, and crossed the rocks.

Our readers know the result; he learned enough to prove to him that Monsieur de Tourville was the lover, not the brother, of the beautiful girl who bore the same name. On returning home that day, he sent off a messenger to Paris with a letter, and directions to bring back an answer; this done, he waited the arrival of Sergeant Perrin.

CHAPTER XXX.

AFTER parting from Julian Arden by the chestnut tree, Lieutenant Thornton proceeded to the house, his mind fully occupied with the sudden and strange appearance of Julian, and the somewhat critical position which they were all in ; liable every moment to be discovered and sent to a prison. It was vexatious, also, that Jean Plessis was absent, as he was thus left with the female part of the family, to stand the brunt of Sergeant François Perrin's examination.

On reaching the hall door, he was met by Julia Plessis ; she was not at all uneasy, but handed him a pocket-book, saying—

"I have left Sergeant Perrin fully occupied over a bottle of Cognac, to which he is greatly attached ; you will have time to proceed to your room, and run your eyes over the papers prepared for you, which are in that book. It is unlucky my father is away ; but the sergeant does not appear to be at all inquisitive—merely requesting to see you and your papers, and get you to write your name in his book."

"If we can avoid bringing Pierre Bompert before him," said our hero, "there will be no suspicion excited."

He then proceeded to his chamber, and read over the papers. He was described as Monsieur Philip de Tourville, twenty-three years of age, and a native of Pontri and Picardy, with an attendant, named Pierre Bompert, also a native of the same place ; there was no description of person, &c., as became the case some years afterwards ; the paper being a simple register of name, and signed by the Paris official, and required to be read and signed by the maire of the district. Marie de Tourville had a separate paper. Having read the short document, he descended to the sitting-room, anxious to see Mabel, fearing she might be uneasy, and at the same time to break to her the joyful tidings of not only her brother's safety, but his being then actually at Dame Moret's.

On entering the room, Mabel looked anxiously into his face, to judge if he felt alarmed ; but he looked so cheerful, and made so light of the matter, that her sweet features brightened, as he sat down by her side, saying—

"I have intelligence, dear Mabel, that will gladden your heart."

Our heroine looked anxious, saying—

"What have you heard, dear William, since I saw you ? I learned from Rose that you were gone to speak to a sailor, calling himself Louis Lebeau. Did he bring you the good news you speak of ? Do you know I thought Rose looked as if she had something to communicate, and yet refrained for some reason ?"

"Rose, I dare say," said the lieutenant, "wished me to impart a piece of intelligence that will fill your heart with joy."

"Can you mean, William," said Mabel eagerly, and her hand resting on that of her lover, "can you mean that you have heard any tidings of poor Julian?"

"Yes," said the lieutenant, kissing the fair hand resting on his; "yes, sure and certain news of his not only being alive and well, but of his arrival in France."

"Heaven be praised!" fervently exclaimed Mabel, the tears coming into her eyes; "what joy this will be to my beloved mother. Did this Louis Lebeau bring you this joyful intelligence?"

"He did, dearest."

And bending down his head, he whispered a few words in her ear.

With an uncontrollable feeling of deep emotion, Mabel threw her arms round her lover's neck, and laid her head upon his shoulder, weeping with excess of joy.

"William, William, what joy you have imparted to my heart; dear Julian so near me!"

The door opened as she uttered the words, and Madame Plessis and Julia entered the room. They also had learned the news from Rose; for Julia, kissing her friend kindly, wished her joy of the happy intelligence.

"But now, dear Mabel, put on a grave, or rather, a careless face; for Sergeant Perrin is waiting for you both in the green-room."

Mabel gave a slight shudder; but, looking up with a smile, said—

"I am ready; I feel no fear when with my good brother Philip;" and putting her arm within Lieutenant Thornton's, they left the room, and proceeded to a chamber where Sergeant François Perrin awaited them, seated at a table, on which stood a half-emptied decanter of Cognac and some dried fruit and cakes; for Julia Plessis knew the worthy gendarme's love for "une petite verrée."

Sergeant Perrin rose. He was not at all the worse for the refreshment he had partaken of at Dame Moret's, nor the ample addition he had just imbibed; but his cheeks, and especially that interesting feature, his nose, showed a great increase of colour.

"Well, sergeant," said Lieutenant Thornton, "you are come, I hear, to pay us the usual visit, and inspect our papers. All right; there is nothing like regularity, and knowing who you have in your district in these times."

"Oui, monsieur, oui. You have a reasonable idea of our duty—not always a very pleasant one; but mademoiselle here,"

turning to Julia, "always makes the château a pleasant place to visit."

As he spoke, he placed his book on the table before him, and then very politely requested Monsieur de Tourville to let him have a look at his papers.

Sergeant Perrin read the paper presented, compared it with some remarks in his book; and, with a bow returned it, saying—

"Quite correct, monsieur; but, if you please, I must just have a look at your man, Pierre Bompert—a mere form, but it's my duty, and Monsieur le Maire requires an exact performance of my official duties."

"Certainly," said Lieutenant Thornton, "you shall see him, poor fellow. He is, and has been for years, deaf and dumb; but as fine and faithful a fellow as ever lived. I am so accustomed to his sighs and ways, that I scarcely remark his being dumb."

"Eh, mon Dieu!" said the sergeant, referring to his book, "it does not say a word about Pierre Bompert's deafness, or his being dumb either."

"Nevertheless the poor fellow has to bear both severe afflictions," said Lieutenant Thornton; "but he is very cheerful, and looks well and hearty."

The sergeant's book having been signed both by Mabel and our hero, as Marie and Philip de Tourville, the ladies retired, and in a few minutes Bill Saunders walked into the room, gazing at Sergeant Perrin with a look of stolid indifference.

"Ha, mon Dieu! a fine fellow," said the gendarme; "what a misfortune!"

He then looked at his book and read out: "Pierre Bompert, aged thirty, native of Picardy. Tell him, monsieur, to write his name here," continued the sergeant, putting the book before our hero.

Here was a difficulty Lieutenant Thornton had not prepared for. Bill could write very well his own name or anything else; but how to get him to comprehend that he was to write Pierre Bompert before the sergeant was another thing.

"Mon Dieu!" said our hero, "that part of his education was neglected, owing to his infirmity; but I will get him to put his mark, if that will do."

"Sacristie, it must," said the sergeant, helping himself to another glass of Cognac, to brighten his ideas, which were getting rather confused. "A deaf and dumb man cannot well be expected to write. Pardon, monsieur; write his name yourself, and say, 'For my servant, Pierre Bompert, who is deaf and dumb.'"

This our hero did, and underneath the sergeant wrote "his mark," and handed the pen to Bill.

Lieutenant Thornton made a sign to the pretended Bompert to make a cross where he put his finger.

Bill, with a very ludicrous expression of countenance, took the pen, and made a cross very nearly as long and as broad as the cross-tree of the Diamond; whilst the sergeant roared out—

"Tonnerre de Dieu ! comment cela, diable—that cross."

"It is very plain, but rather large," returned our hero, vexed, though inclined to laugh, whilst the sergeant was busy reducing the dimensions of the formidable cross, which nearly erased all the previous writing. Bill looked on, and tapping the sergeant rather hard on the head with his knuckles, uttered such a hideous combination of guttural sounds, that the gendarme sprang to his feet, looking at him rather startled.

"Poor fellow !" said Lieutenant Thornton, "he is very harmless, but not quite right here," and he touched his head.

"Ah, ça ! do you say so ?" said the Frenchman, packing up his books and looking at Bill, who was amusing himself poising a large knife that was lying on the table on the point of his finger. "Your man is un drole ; but, parbleu ! I would rather he attended on you than me, monsieur."

"I should say so, too, Sergeant Perrin ; custom is everything ; though he is subject to strange freaks, and does odd things, and is not very musical in the sounds he utters, yet his attachment makes up for every other defect."

Sergeant Perrin looked earnestly in the face of Lieutenant Thornton, with a somewhat bewildered expression, but taking up his hat he took his leave, passing out into the kitchen where he had left his comrade, and shortly after both mounted their horses and rode away, taking the direction of the château of Monsieur Gramont.

On reaching that mansion, the sergeant was ushered into a chamber where Monsieur le Maire was sitting alone, doing what Frenchmen very seldom do, sipping his claret after dinner.

"Well, sergeant, sit down and help yourself," said Monsieur Gramont ; but the worthy gendarme had helped himself so often that day that his faculties were slightly obscured. He sat down, however, and cast a glance at the claret, a drink he detested, and said—

"I never drink claret, Monsieur le Maire ; it sits uneasy on my stomach ; but, ma foi, I confess, thanks to Dame Moret, and afterwards to the kindness of pretty Mademoiselle Julia, I have had enough. I do not usually, you see, indulge, but I did so to-day, to suit monsieur's views."

"You are very obliging, mon ami," said Monsieur Gramont ; "we must do disagreeable things sometimes, but a small glass of Cognac will refresh you after your ride ;" and touching a bell, he

ordered the domestic who answered the summons to bring in some brandy.

"Now, sergeant, what have you discovered from your visit to Dame Moret's, and to the château Coulancourt?"

"Pardieu! monsieur, I have managed to track the whole proceedings of this pretended Monsieur de Tourville, and his man Bompert, from the very beginning."

"Bien! just as I suspected," said Monsieur Gramont; "but has this pretended De Tourville any idea you suspect him?"

"Parbleu! no, monsieur. If he played his part well, so did I mine. But there is another personage come on the stage that puzzles me."

"Never mind him now, sergeant; stick to this Philip de Tourville."

"Eh, bien! monsieur," returned the sergeant, helping himself to a glass of brandy, the liquor making him exceedingly loquacious. "A day or two before I proceeded to Dame Moret's I sent one of my men to the village in plain clothes, just to saunter about and pick up all he could. He learned that, on the morning of the wreck, two men came to Dame Moret's house, and, as he supposed, stayed there; but he heard afterwards, for no one saw them come out, that the next morning two persons were seen at the windows of Château Coulancourt, and a few days afterwards Dame Moret gave out that a Monsieur de Tourville and his servant were come to stay a few weeks at the château, to fish and look about the country. This was all he could learn; but this satisfied me that these two men were the two sailors seen crossing the sands from Lyon Point the morning after the wreck of the Vengeance."

"Of that I am quite satisfied," said Bertram Gramont; "did you make any further discoveries at Dame Moret's, or in the village?"

"No, monsieur; the old woman was keen enough, and stuck to her report of Monsieur de Tourville's residing in the château; but I found a young man in her house, who excites my suspicion, from his coming from the same part of the coast where the Vengeance was wrecked. He gave his name as Louis Lebeau, of Rouen, a sailor. He said he belonged to a brig, from Bordeaux, bound to Hamburg; that he and the captain quarrelled, and so he was put ashore at his own request. I appeared quite satisfied, did not even examine his papers, but I have an intelligent spy watching his movements; for it looks odd, all these strangers coming from the same part of the coast, and where there are no habitations."

"Humph!" muttered Monsieur Gramont, "what can they be about? This Lebeau, depend on it, is another Englishman."

Keep your eye on him, sergeant. Did you observe anything particular at the château?"

"No, Monsieur Gramont; they all seemed pretty well up to their parts; that big fellow, that passes himself off as Pierre Bompard, rather startled me; but I'll swear he is neither deaf nor dumb. When he put his mark to my book, he made one as large as his foot, and I could see his eyes twinkle with suppressed laughter. What do you intend to do, Monsieur Gramont? It will not do to let these English aristocrats loose over the country."

"No; such is not my intention," said Bertram Gramont, "but we have them safe enough; so let us find out their designs. There is something going on between them and this ingenious Monsieur Plessis, who has contrived hitherto to keep his head on his shoulders marvellously well. Do you keep a watch upon this Louis Lebeau. I will send a messenger to Rouen, and make some inquiries there; but do nothing rash. I will manage before long to have the whole of them in a net they will not get out of."

As Sergeant Perrin and his men were bound to obey the instructions of Monsieur Gramont, he replied—

"As you wish, monsieur, I am ready to follow up your instructions."

Shortly after, the sergeant and his follower left the château.

The following day Bertram Gramont received letters from Paris; he and Augustine Vadier were together when they arrived. One was an official letter from the Minister of Police, and contained but the following words:—

"Madame de Coulancourt has obtained permission to retire for the summer months to her Château de Coulancourt. Have the movements of all the persons in the château carefully watched."

"I begin to fancy I see through their movements," said Bertram Gramont. "I am satisfied that Mademoiselle de Tourville is Madame de Coulancourt's daughter. That lady is coming down here, and I'll venture my life they have a project in their heads of escaping, with these Englishman, some way or other, to England."

"Eh, bien!" said Augustine Vadier, "let them make the trial, you will gain your ends. She will forfeit her estates if she is mad enough to attempt such a thing; and just as they are on the point of escaping, you can entrap them, and hand them over to the mercy of the law."

"Yes, that will do very well," replied Monsieur Gramont; "but I have taken a great fancy to the daughter; if I could make her my wife, and throw these Englishmen into prison, I shall do much better. If I fail I have still the other remedy."

In a few days I will pay a friendly visit to Coulancourt, and see madame; as maire of the district, it is my duty to do so."

Augustine Vadier looked gloomy and discontented, but he made no further remark or opposition to his patron's projects.

CHAPTER XXXI.

TEN or twelve days after the events recorded in our last chapter, a very happy and pleasant party were assembled in the grand saloon of the Château Coulancourt.

Madame Coulancourt, her son Julian, her daughter Mabel, and our hero, were now together; each had related to the other his or her various adventures, and now all their attention and object was directed to an escape to England. Madame de Coulancourt had arrived from Paris two days before; need we describe her rapture and joy, when Julian threw himself into her arms—the son so long lost, and so deeply lamented?

Madame de Coulancourt was still a beautiful and fascinating woman, scarcely more than forty. Her ardent desire was to quit France for ever; she cared not for the loss of property. Coulancourt was all she could lose, having sold her other estates for nearly two hundred thousand francs. This Jean Plessis had managed, through the instrumentality of one of the directors, named Barras, a man of the most depraved and dissolute life, and of the most unbounded extravagance. At this time Barras had almost unlimited power; he was one of the three remaining directors. The other two, though men of stern integrity of purpose, were yet ruled by Barras, who alone of the three was capable of receiving foreign ambassadors, holding levées, and giving entertainments, for he was possessed of easy and polished manners, and put off the strange fantastic dress the directors at that period attired themselves in, assuming the graceful costume of the days of chivalry, the doublet and plumed bonnet of Francis I.

Barras was totally unprincipled; he sold almost every office in his power to enable him to keep up his vain and luxurious career. The terrible depravity and licentiousness that prevailed in France at this era, it is well known, was the result of deplorable corruption. Barras permitted the sale of Madame de Coulancourt's property, reserving for himself the half of whatever it produced; thus Jean Plessis managed to secure the other half, as well as to obtain permission for her to visit Château Coulancourt.

The fearful state of France, and the horrid depravity of manners prevailing in Paris, had first excited in Madame Coulandcourt the wish to attempt a flight to England. The only drawback that held her irresolute was the fear of dragging Jean Plessis and his family into trouble. But that gentleman was secure in the favour of Barras; and declared, if her escape was to be attempted, it was whilst Barras was in power. No human being could conjecture how long that power might last, so conflicting and evanescent was everything in those days.

Monsieur Plessis and family were gone to Havre for a day or two, to make some purchases; thus, only Madame Coulandcourt, her son and daughter, and Lieutenant Thornton, remained in the château with their domestics and Rose. They were planning their intended project of escaping into Flanders, and thence to England; but our hero thought that mode of getting out of France hazardous in the extreme.

"I was conversing with Julian last night upon this subject," he observed, "and we both agreed that our flight could much more easily be contrived by sea."

"By sea!" repeated mother and daughter, "how procure a vessel? and where embark? we should be detected at once, at any port in France."

"I have a bold project in my head," said the English lieutenant; "we have hitherto escaped all suspicion; even Monsieur Gramont is growing polite and affable, and pays you every attention."

"Ah!" said Mabel, shaking her head, "I strongly doubt his politeness; there is something working in his brain, I am sure. I have caught his eye fixed upon you several times with a very meaning glance."

The young man smiled, and looking affectionately at Mabel, said—

"If he had any suspicion he would never have allowed all this time to elapse without acting. However, I will tell you how Julian and I have thought of proceeding. The Vengeance privateer is almost ready for sea. She is repaired, and all nearly complete, lying at anchor in a pool in the creek; and, from what Rose Moret heard her brother-in-law say, it is her captain's intention, in a week or so, to take her round to Havre for stores."

"But, dear William," observed Mabel, anxiously, "the idea of you and Julian seizing this privateer with her crew on board is surely only an imaginary project?"

"No, dearest, we are not so mad as that," said Lieutenant Thornton, with a smile. "You must hear me out. Captain O'Loughlin is still on the coast with the Onyx corvette. Rose says her brother in his lugger passed within hail of the Onyx

the day before yesterday. Now, Julian and I purpose to go to-morrow to Lyon Head, and have a look-out, and to repeat our visit every day till we are able to make a signal to the corvette. If we fail in establishing communication with her, of course our project falls to the ground, for three persons could never dream of capturing the Vengeance. To signal the Onyx is worth the trial, however."

"Well," said Madame Coulancourt, after a moment's thought, "I do think William's project has a chance of success; though all depends on being able, as he says, of communicating with the corvette."

"Then supposing you do communicate with Captain O'Loughlin," said Mabel, anxiously, "how would you proceed?"

"Oh! nothing easier in that case," interrupted Julian, eagerly, "with a boat's crew we should seize the Vengeance, which William is so desperately anxious to do, to pay off Captain Gaudet for his cruelty, embark you on board, and before any alarm could be given at Havre, we should be at sea, and with the corvette hold our own against any armed crafts sent after us."

"Would not this involve Jean Plessis with the authorities?" asked Madame Coulancourt.

"Not more than any other mode of escape," replied her nephew; "but Monsieur Plessis is so secure of the favour of Barras, and has him so much in his power, that he feels very little uneasiness even if he remained behind. Though he has not yet spoken to you on the subject, he is nearly as anxious to quit France with his family as you are. The precariousness of life and property in this country urges him to emigrate and settle in England; and I have offered him," continued Lieutenant Thornton, "on succeeding to the property I am entitled to, the stewardship over the whole, and a sufficient annuity to live independently on."

"Oh! I am sure," cried both Madame Coulancourt and Mabel, eagerly, "if that is Jean Plessis' wish and intention we shall both be able to render him not only independent, but most comfortable. He has all his life," continued madame, "served the duke my husband, and myself, with unshaken fidelity, and I feel towards him as towards one connected with my family with ties of relationship. Julian also will be entitled to the Etherton property, though, at the same time, it will be cruel to deprive those now in possession of all they have so long considered their own; therefore, some kind of decision ought to take place. I am sure Julian will agree with me."

"Most certainly, dear mother; my uncle or his son—the latter now holds the title and property—were innocently

inheritors of it, and to deprive them of all now might involve them in difficulties insurmountable."

"And yet," said Lieutenant Thornton, somewhat sternly, "they, especially the late baronet, felt no pity or remorse in not only refusing Mabel's claims, but in adding insult and mockery to their heartlessness, though they knew in their hearts that my poor little *protégée*, as I was then in the habit of styling her, was thrown in a manner helpless upon the exertions of two poor sailors."

"And nobly the two poor sailors protected little Mabel," said our heroine, the tears rising in her eyes, as she looked with devoted affection into the face of her lover.

"I, at all events, dear Mabel," said our hero, "am richly repaid, by living in the memory of her I protected to the best of my ability."

"Ah!" said Madame Coulaucourt, with an earnestness unmistakable, "would to God we were all in dear England! What I have suffered in this land I can never tell; even when restored to liberty, living in Paris, and forced to enter society to avoid the remarks, and the secret espionage of the Minister of Police. When the constraint and gloom of the Jacobin rule was discarded, the thirst for amusement and dissipation that followed was carried to an unbounded and disgusting excess, in manners, in attire, and in immorality. It was only in the circles of Madame Josephine Beauharnais, that most amiable of women, and Madame Canabas, whose beauty was perfectly entrancing, and Madame de Stäel, that a refuge was to be obtained from the licentiousness everywhere else openly and unblushingly displayed. You would scarcely believe it, but I was forced to attend balls, where none but the relations of persons who had suffered death under the axe of the guillotine were allowed to appear. Our hair also was tied up as it would have been previous to execution. These fêtes were termed 'Balls of the victims.' Then came the dreadful famine; ah! memory will always cling to the scenes of the past, and yet how truly merciful has Providence been to me! Have I not my children? It is wrong to murmur, whilst joy and thankfulness should fill my heart."

Lieutenant Thornton had his eyes fixed upon his aunt; he thought he had never beheld a face possessing so perfectly fascinating an expression. In her youth she must have been—lovely as Mabel was—much more beautiful; her height was tall and commanding, with easy and graceful manner. The evening passed pleasantly over, conversing on the past, and proposing many schemes for the future.

Monsieur Gramont was said to have gone to Paris; all appeared tranquil around them. Lieutenant Thornton and

Julian Arden, the following morning, set out for a visit to Lyon Head, to have a look out over old ocean. The month was not yet out during which the *Onyx* was expected to be cruising on and off the coast, and the two young men hoped to be able, during their trips to the Head, to get a glimpse of her, for they both knew what a sincere, anxious friend Captain O'Loughlin was, and how determinedly he would keep his word, provided his duty permitted him to do so. The distance to Lyon Head from the château was scarcely six miles, and, by avoiding the village, the road led through a very deserted part of the country, and across ranges of sand hills.

Skirting the village, the two young men soon came in upon the desert track, and commenced traversing those singular mountains of sand, many of them above one hundred feet in height, and covered with a wild and curious species of vegetation, peculiar to them and their soil. These sand hills were three miles in breadth, and terminated at the eastern extremity by a rocky shore. Long before they reached Lyon Head they obtained a clear view of the sea to the westward; but the entrance to Havre was shut out from their sight by the cliffs of Caux. They could see many vessels, making evidently for the mouth of the Seine, but no vessel of war met their anxious gaze. On gaining the Head, they commanded a view to the eastward. Julian carried a pocket telescope, but nothing in the shape of a cruiser met their gaze.

"I am not at all disheartened," said Lieutenant Thornton; "it may be several days before we see the *Onyx*."

"Neither am I," said Julian; "so let us, as there is nothing in sight, cross this headland, and get a sight of the creek where the *Vengeance* lies."

In half an hour they had gained a part of the coast that commanded a view of the creek and its mouth. It was a very singular inlet; extremely narrow at the mouth, and from the sea exceedingly difficult to be discovered, and dangerous to enter, on account of rocks crossing its mouth; for the tide being low, they could see that the rocks they were then looking at would be covered at high water. A quarter of a mile inside, the inlet opened into a fine pool of water, never entirely dry, in which they could see not only that the *Vengeance* lay afloat, but that there was a very handsome brig, a cutter, and half-a-dozen large lugger boats, fishing crafts, also afloat; part of the creek ran towards Coulancourt, which was perfectly dry at low water. The other branch led away to the eastward, and seemed to be the run of a large river.

Descending the hill, they made their way over the rocks till they gained a spot where they could obtain a near view of the celebrated privateer that caused Sir Sidney Smith two years of

miserable imprisonment. From where they were concealed, they had a clear view, between the rocks, of the Vengeance, which appeared almost ready for sea, not having suffered in her hull so much by the fire as was supposed, for on running ashore, the ground swell rising in upon her flaming deck, immediately extinguished the fire. She was a remarkably handsome craft, very long, and with a graceful sheer and elongated bow; with masts much tauter than her previous ones, and her yards proportionably square, so that her lug-sails were greatly increased. Several men were employed setting up the rigging; the mizen-mast was yet unshipped. On the opposite side of the creek was a long wooden shed containing stores, and several other sheds, and a very long stone building showed that vessels were built and repaired there; for a large collection of spars and timber lay along the shore and in the water.

"I would rather cut that vessel out," said Lieutenant Thornton, "than sink a French seventy-four. My gallant commander may linger years in a French prison owing to her, whilst I and Saunders nearly fell victims to her cut-throat commander."

"Your only consolation is, William," replied Julian, "that you are here to protect my mother and sister in escaping out of this country."

The inspection was ended for that day. The two following they resumed their watch, and were equally unsuccessful; but, on the third morning, Julian was certain that a ship lying-to in the distance was the Onyx. They watched her for hours, but she remained almost stationary. Unfortunately, in returning home, Julian, descending the rough side of the cliff, sprained his ankle, which swelled so much after the walk, that he found it impossible to leave the house the next morning. Our hero, having seen the vessel lying-to off the land, was more anxious to go, and Monsieur Plessis having returned from Havre, stated that there was some popular commotion on foot in that town, and a large force of gendarmes had been called in from Rouen to aid the military there.

Taking Bill Saunders with him, our hero set out for Lyon Head, rather late in the morning. Mabel was uneasy at his going, and tried to persuade him to stay till the next day, when Julian would probably be able to accompany him.

"I am so anxious, dear Mabel," he said, "to get you out of this country. No mortal possessed of a treasure, ever coveted its security as I do your safety. That troublesome Monsieur Gramont is absent, the people of Havre are in commotion—now is the time to get away. If that vessel Julian declares to be the corvette is really the Onyx, she may be close in

to-day, the weather is beautiful, and a nice breeze blowing off shore."

So, tenderly pressing the hand that lay so lovingly in his, he departed, with Bill in great spirits, rejoicing at having a prospect of looking again at his favourite element, and of getting once more on board a British man-of-war, and regaining the full power of his tongue.

CHAPTER XXXII.

LIEUTENANT THORNTON and Bill Saunders reached the sand hills without meeting a single person, or, as they thought, without attracting the notice of any one; but they were mistaken. As they crossed the sand hills, every now and then the bare head of a lad, some fourteen years of age, popped up from behind a hill, and regarded earnestly their progress, following them carefully, and concealing himself in the hollows and thick rushes, in the damp places. They had scarcely reached the rocks, and climbed nearly to the summit, when the loud boom of a heavy gun reverberated along the cliffs.

"Blow me!" exclaimed Bill, springing over some rocks, "there's a frigate's gun; it was quite close under the cliffs."

The next moment the top-gallant sails of a ship of war showed above the head, but they could not make out the vessel, for, though her top-sails were plainly visible, she was full a mile off shore; and our hero and Bill were in a hollow—they perceived a gig, with four oars, and a young lad in the stern-sheets, pulling out from under the head.

"English! hurrah!" exclaimed Bill, with a cheer that pealed over the sea, and reached the ears of those in the boat. The men rested on their oars, and Bill waved a red flag, which he had brought in his pocket, in the air. Instantly another flag was waved from the boat, and her head turned for the beach.

"Hurrah!" again shouted Bill, and both he and Lieutenant Thornton made for the beach; but as they came out from the hollow, and reached the foot of a deep descent, a loud voice from above hailed, in French—

"Stand, or we fire."

Our hero looked up, and beheld more than a dozen men in uniform, some fifty yards above them, with muskets pointed directly at them.

"Spring over the cliff, Bill, or we're dead men;" and, with a bound, he threw himself over, instantly followed by Saunders. As they did so, a volley of musketry rattled over the spot, and

shattered portions of the rock on which, a moment before, they had been standing.

A man sprang up amongst the gendarmes—it was Augustine Vadier—who, shaking his clenched hand fiercely, exclaimed to the men, “Reload, or, curse them, they will escape, and then follow them.”

The two Englishmen rolled over the ascent, with fragments of rock and red earth clattering down with them, for ten or fifteen yards. Unfortunately, a huge fragment of rock struck our hero on the head, leaving him totally senseless at the foot of the descent. Bill picked himself up, a little bewildered by the rapidity of their descent, but, seeing his master senseless, he gave a shout of rage, and cast back a look of vengeance on the gendarmes scrambling down the rocks; but the men in the boat shouted loudly, “Quick, quick; to the beach.”

Lifting the senseless body of his master, Bill, with a desperate energy, rushed toward the spot where the boat had run right in on the beach. Another volley, the balls rattling all round him, expedited Bill’s movements; but a powerful ally had now come to his aid—the corvette had opened the scene of action; a flash, a wreath of smoke, and then the iron messenger struck the cliff above, scattering the splinters of the rocks into the very faces of the pursuing gendarmes. Augustine Vadier was struck to the earth by a huge splinter of stone in the right eye. The men threw themselves back and lay flat under the rocks, for another gun pealed over the quiet sea, and the iron storm—for this time it was grape—tore up the rocks within ten paces of the Frenchmen, which made them spring to their legs and retreat down the other side of the cliff, dragging the bleeding and furious Augustine Vadier with them.

In the meantime Bill reached the boat, panting with exertion, and two of the men, leaping into the water, ran to his assistance.

“Not dead, I trust,” cried the midshipman, gazing at the still insensible body of our hero, as the men placed him in the bottom of the boat, on a sail.

“Dead!” shrieked Bill, gasping for breath; “if he’s dead, blow my brains out, and I’ll thank you! I don’t care a curse to live if the lubbers have shot the bravest officer that ever breathed,” he continued, the heat-drops pouring down his face, and his emotion blinding him.

“No, thank God! he is not dead,” said the young midshipman, as the boat pulled towards the corvette; “he is bleeding from a cut on the side of the head; but who is he, and who are you, my man? I thought this gentleman was Mr. Julian Arden.”

“Not dead? hurrah!” exclaimed Bill, tossing his cap into

the air; "give us your fin; blow me, but you're a fine lad Lord love ye! I'm a true salt, though you do see me rigged in this hermaphrodite fashion. That's Lieutenant Thornton—bless him! he's coming to—and I'm Bill Saunders. Both on us belong to the old Diamond, and if that ere craft is the Onyx, her commander will be as glad to see Lieutenant Thornton as his own brother."

"You are right, my fine fellow," answered the young midshipman; "Captain O'Loughlin would give his life at any time to serve this gentleman. See, he is recovering fast," watching Bill wash the blood from the cut and bathe his master's face; "he was only stunned."

"It's all right! Blow me, if I ain't as glad as if a ship's anchor was taken off my breast," said Bill, as the boat shot up alongside the Onyx corvette—Commander O'Loughlin, Lieutenant Pole, and a number of the crew, crowding and gazing over the bulwarks eagerly.

"Who have you there, Master Burdett?" inquired O'Loughlin, anxiously; "not Mr. Julian Arden wounded, I trust."

"No, sir," said the midshipman, "it's Lieutenant Thornton."

"What! Sir Oscar de Bracy!" vehemently exclaimed the commander, springing over the side into the boat, with an expression of deep emotion in his manner and voice.

Our hero just then opened his eyes, and made an effort to get up.

"Thank God, he is only stunned," said O'Loughlin, joyfully, as his friend gazed into his face, with a smile, saying, in a low voice—

"Not the first knock on the head, Patrick, I have had; I am not much hurt; where is Bill, Bill Saunders—you remember him?"

"Here, your honour, here, thank God! and your honour's nothing the worse. The lubbers thought to pepper us, but his honour, Captain O'Loughlin, gave them a dose they didn't like to stay to have repeated."

"My fine fellow, I am glad to see you," said the commander of the Onyx, shaking Bill's hand as warmly as he would have done that of a friend; "I thought if ever one was heard of, the other would not be far off."

With the assistance of Charles Pole, our hero was conveyed into the cabin, and the surgeon proceeded to dress the wound in the head, which he pronounced to be extremely trifling; the point of the rock inflicting the wound had not caused the insensibility, but a blow against a flat rock, at the bottom of the descent.

A glass or two of wine seemed to revive Lieutenant Thorn-

ton, and with his return to consciousness, he began to experience great anxiety respecting Mabel and her mother, lest they might be implicated by this untoward event. Were they all discovered? or were the men that surprised and fired upon him and Bill, only watching the movements of those in the boat? but this latter idea was discarded, for by the shouts and words of the gendarmes, they were evidently watching his own and Bill's movements, and not the corvette's.

"In the name of fate, Sir Oscar," said Commander O'Loughlin, as soon as he perceived his friend sufficiently restored to talk, "in the name of fate, how came you on this part of the coast? Do you know who I thought you were?"

"Oh, yes, quite well, Patrick; you took me for Julian Arden," returned our hero; "he and I have, these last four or five days, been daily watching you from Lyon Head."

"Be the powers of war! but this is very extraordinary. I was lying-to yesterday, after tracing a brig into some creek off this head, and this morning I sent young Burdett in the gig to see if he could make out the mouth of a creek or inlet of the sea I knew to be somewhere near where I picked you up; and as I was passing my glass along the cliff, I caught sight of a party of armed men, passing along the outward face of the head; the sun was glancing on their muskets and accoutrements, so I fired a gun to bring the boat back. I beheld the men disappear round the point, and shortly after, as we stood on and opened the other side, we saw the flash of their muskets, whilst pursuing you, as it turned out; so I let fly a shot to freshen their way, for I thought the fugitive might be Julian Arden. But how you came to be there with Bill Saunders, amazes me; did you escape out of prison?"

"Thank God, I have not been in one since I left the Diamond; poor Sidney Smith, and young Wright, were marched off to Paris. But, my dear friend, I am in a dreadful state of anxiety; I must get ashore again to-night."

"Faith, that would be madness," said Captain O'Loughlin; "the whole coast will be roused, and a keen watch kept for miles along the beach."

Our hero looked deeply distressed; after a moment he said—

"Do you know that that infernal privateer, the Vengeance, that caused the captivity of Sir Sidney Smith, is actually at anchor within the creek you mentioned just now?"

"The devil she is! then, by the powers of Moll Kelly! I'll cut her out or burn her."

"She'll never burn," returned our hero, bitterly; "though I was deuced near burning in her; but to make you up to the thing, give me another glass of wine; I'm as well now as ever I was; and if we are to have the task of cutting out this

Vengeance, it must be done to-night, or not at all, for if we delay, they will work her some miles up the creek."

Lieutenant Thornton then gave his friend a brief but clear account of what had befallen him from the period of Sir Sidney Smith's attempting to cut out the Vengeance from the port of Havre, to his arrival on board the corvette.

"Well, by the immortal powers! you amaze me. Mabel in France, and Madame Coulancourt and her son Julian restored to each other! How far is the château from the coast?"

"Fully six miles."

"Then we must have the privateer this very night; there's a breeze off the land; let me see, it will be high water about eleven o'clock; there's no moon, and it's cloudy; but do you feel strong enough for the exertion?"

"Strong enough!" repeated Lieutenant Thornton; "there's nothing the matter with me; it was only the suddenness and violence of the blow that caused insensibility; but I rejoice to say that's quite gone now."

"How many men do you think there are on board the Vengeance?" questioned O'Loughlin.

"I counted fourteen or fifteen the day before yesterday; there may be three or four more. There is an armed brig in the creek."

"What! an hermaphrodite brig, with a great rake in her main-mast, and a red streak, and pierced for eight guns?"

"By Jove! I think so; she is an hermaphrodite, and I know her main-mast rakes a good deal, for Julian remarked it to me; I was so intently regarding the Vengeance, that I heeded the brig very little."

"By St. Patrick! I must have that brig," said the commander of the corvette. "Four days ago I chased her some ten leagues to the eastward of Lyon Point, and lost her just here in a fog of not an hour's duration, and a stark calm; and, be the powers of war! when the fog cleared off, the deuce a bit of the brig was to be seen. She evidently was towed into that inlet. What kind of a place is it?"

"A fine sheet of water inside; but there are several rocks to the right of the entrance, covered at high water, and the entrance itself is a blind one."

"Yes, faith, I know it is; but we'll find it with the boats. How's your appetite? We'll have some supper, and then prepare for action."

"My appetite is good enough; but I am intensely anxious about Mabel, her mother, and Julian; I fear they will be suspected, seized, and sent to Paris. I am sure that detestable Monsieur Gramont is at the bottom of this affair. They must have thought to seize Julian and myself; and yet, why let us

go to Lyon Head for that purpose, when we could as readily have been arrested at the château? It is puzzling."

"It's marvellously unfortunate," said Captain O'Loughlin, with a vexed air; "and for the life of me, I cannot see how this untoward event can be remedied. You may depend on it the military will be on the alert from Havre, to prevent any communication with the château; and you yourself know the rules of the service would prevent me attempting an attack upon the mansion; though if I thought we had any chance of rescuing Madame Coulangcourt and Mabel, and that the lives of my men would not be uselessly sacrificed, I would cheerfully run the risk of being broken and dismissed the service."

"No, my kind friend, that must not be; your men must not incur such a risk as that, without a chance of benefiting the service. We will cut out this Vengeance, because she has been a pest to our commerce, and will be again if she is not taken or destroyed; but I wish, though I certainly do not owe him any good will myself, I wish the captain of the privateer's life to be spared, because he is the son-in-law of a very good and kind old dame that did me great service."

"Unless he kills himself in his desperation; for, by your account, he is a ferocious fellow. I will give orders to avoid killing him if possible. You will take the command of the launch, with a long twelve-pound carronade in her, young Burdett, and sixteen men; I will take the pinnace; and Pole, with an eight-pounder and fourteen men, will take the other boat. I think this force will be sufficient, even if they have taken alarm and increased their crew; but they may fancy, from the secrecy and security of this inlet, that no attempt may be thought of against them."

"It's very possible; but I think they may be alarmed, seeing the corvette so close in with the land, and station men on the rocks on each side the creek," said our hero. "Do you know if there is any vessel of war in Havre?"

"Not of any consequence," said O'Loughlin; "except armed luggers, a cutter, two chasse-mares, and, I believe, a large privateer, just ready for sea. Our fleet is off Brest, and has swept the Channel."

Lieutenant Thornton, before the hour arrived for setting out on the expedition, felt not the slightest uneasiness from the contusion on his head, but was anxious and disturbed lest his absence might materially affect the future happiness of those most dear to him. He was also greatly puzzled respecting the motives and means adopted for seizing him and Julian; for those awaiting him at Lyon Head, no doubt thought that Julian would, as usual, accompany him. He had observed a man, not in uniform, stand forward prominently amongst the

armed men, and, with violent gesticulations, urge them to reload and pursue; who he was he could have no idea; but it satisfied him that they had been stationed there to intercept him. On ascending upon deck, he found the *Onyx* was lying-to, with her fore-top sails aback, and her courses brailed. There was a steady breeze from the land, the water quite smooth, and the sky cloudy. It was now nearly nine o'clock, and the crew were busy preparing for the expedition.

"It will not be dark till nearly ten o'clock," said Lieutenant Pole, joining our hero. "You had a lucky escape from those fellows, William."

"By Jove! I had, Charles," responded our hero. "Have you had any letters or news from England since Julian Arden left you?"

"No; we have not spoken with any craft from England who left later than ourselves. We were in company with the *Niger*, Captain Foote, two or three days. He chased a large privateer lugger, who escaped by running in under the Penmarks, and anchored; and he very gallantly cut her out with his boats, after a very desperate resistance; but she had no news, except a rumour of peace."

"I do not believe there is the slightest chance of it," said our hero, thoughtfully; for he was thinking of Mabel. "Did you hear where the *Diamond* was?"

"I think I heard one of the officers of the *Niger* say she returned to Plymouth after the unfortunate attempt upon the *Vengeance*. What do you propose doing, William?"

"I am so put out by this unfortunate affair that I cannot exactly say. I had hoped to effect the escape of Madame Coulancourt and her family from France; but I fear that is now impossible. They may accuse her of intending to leave the country—imprison her, and confiscate her property. In fact, there is no knowing what train of misfortunes may ensue. I have a great mind, after this cutting-out business, to land and endeavour to discover how they are situated."

"I fear you would rashly risk your life, William, and do no good. What could you do single-handed? Besides, now you are free, you will be expected either to retire from the service, or return and report yourself."

"I will not retire during a time of war, Charles, you may depend. If I could only ascertain any tidings of those in the château, I should be lighter in heart."

"Who knows what may occur to-night?" said Lieutenant Pole; "something may turn up—it's impossible to foresee what may happen."

"True, there may be no alarm at the château, except for my, perhaps to them unaccountable, disappearance."

"May I ask you, William, why you do not assume the name of De Bracy, which every one that knows you is aware you are entitled to?"

"Because, Charles, I cannot see that I am as yet entitled, by law, to claim that name. For the present I prefer retaining that of my kind old benefactor. I can fight, or die, or achieve fame under that name as well as any other. I had hoped to have embraced a dear parent, and to have been acknowledged by him; but it was the will of Providence to take his life. I have felt this much, but dare not murmur; so now let us to the work on hand—we must have that Vengeance."

A little after ten o'clock, the *Onyx* filled her top-sails, and stood in for the cliff headland of Lyon Point. The boats were all ready and the men selected, and eager to be led by Lieutenant Thornton, whose gallantry and general good fortune, until the last mishap, was pretty well known to them.

There was a slight breeze from the land, which was in their favour.

"I have changed our mode of attack," said Captain O'Loughlin to our hero, as they walked the quarter-deck, gazing out at the indistinct line of coast, half hid by the haze; "though the change has greatly annoyed Pole. I have determined upon his taking the command of the *Onyx* during our absence. My second lieutenant will take his place. Between you and me, Mr. Joyce is a brave fellow, but somewhat rash. I would rather not leave the ship under his care in our absence; on Pole I can depend in every way: he is cool, calculating, and skilful."

"I think you are quite right; but I fancy if you stayed on board yourself, and let Charles take the pinnace, you would do better still."

"Be the powers of war! catch me at that," said O'Loughlin, laughing; "you are thinking of Sir Sidney, and that there's a chance of two commanders failing in cutting out this redoubtable Vengeance."

"I hope not, Patrick; for, by Jove! that would be paying dearly for the chance of a privateer. It is not that. It strikes me that commanders should not, except in extreme cases, lead in these cutting-out affairs."

"Oh, bother! what's a commander? Many a worthy lieutenant is worth a dozen of some of them. If a commander does get knocked on the head, it makes way for another—it's all in the way of business; besides, I like a thing of the kind. What do you think of the sailing qualities of the corvette?"

"She moves fast and easily through the water," said Lieutenant Thornton; "she's a handsome craft, and, I should say,

makes good weather of it from her beam. She's a splendid sea boat, and as stiff as a church steeple; it must be a hard gale that will make her want two reefs in her top-sail."

"Mr. Thomson," hailed the commander, "put a man in the chains, and take a cast of the lead; we are closer in now than we were this morning."

"Ay, ay, sir," said the mate; and the clear, steady voice of the leads-man was heard giving out the soundings, and shortly after the *Onyx* was hove up in the wind, and an anchor dropped in about nine fathoms of water, about three-quarters of a mile from the shore, and a mile to the eastward of Lyon Head.

The boats were all in the water, the crews served each with a cutlass and brace of pistols. The launch was a fine boat; she carried a long twelve-pounder, loaded with grape, in her bows, and was steered by Master Burdett, the midshipman. Bill Saunders was in his glory; he was to have, by special permission, the charge of the gun.

In a few minutes, all being ready, the men in their places, the row-locks muffled, the word to give way given, off they started, in high spirits. Captain O'Loughlin leading in the pinnace, in which he had a lieutenant of marines and eight men, besides twelve picked men of his own crew. He left the *Vengeance* to our hero and the two boats, his intention being to carry out the brig.

There was scarcely a ripple against the rocks, the water was so smooth. They soon came up with the mouth of the creek, which, by keeping close alongside, they easily found, though from some distance off it would be scarcely visible. The entrance was not unlike that into Dartmouth, but infinitely narrower. The tide was nearly at full, so the boats glided noiselessly up the narrow part—the cliffs being very high and precipitous on both sides. The breeze came steadily down the creek. Just as they opened the wide part, they became aware of a large square-rigged craft, coming down dead before the wind, under top-sails and top-gallant sails.

"The brig," said Lieutenant Thornton to the midshipman. The pinnace was about sixty yards ahead. Just as he uttered the words, a bright line of fire flashed from one side of the creek, and the rattle of musketry broke upon the stillness of the night.

"Discovered, by Jupiter!" said our hero, standing up; "give way, my lads. Any one hit? Keep steady, men."

"No one hit, sir; all right," shouted Bill, from the bow.

"Look, sir, the brig is running ashore!"

Our hero perceived that Captain O'Loughlin pulled up alongside, and, though received with a smart fire of musketry

and pistols, soon gained her deck ; and then the loud cheer of his men was echoed from the steep cliffs.

"All right, my men," said our hero ; "give way, and now for the Vengeance ;" and, through a fierce fire of musketry from the shore, the launch flew through the still waters of the creek.

They were within seventy yards of the Vengeance when she opened fire from an eight-pounder, crammed to the muzzle with grape. The water round the launch was lashed into foam, and the spray flew over the men ; but, as often happens, strange to say, in attacks of the same kind, not a man was hit.

"Now, Bill, give them an answer," said our hero ; and then followed the loud boom of the launch's twelve-pounder, as it poured its deadly contents over the decks of the Vengeance, and the next instant they were alongside, and Lieutenant Thornton, cutlass in hand, sprang upon her deck, followed by his brave crew ; though a desperate volley of musketry was fired full in their faces, killing one man and wounding three.

"Force them overboard, my lads," shouted our hero, as he drove the Frenchmen before him, and saved young Burdett, as he scrambled over the bulwarks, from being annihilated by the butt end of a musket. There were full thirty men on board the Vengeance, and Captain Pierre Gaudet, foaming at the mouth, and furious with passion, was urging them to a furious resistance. Just then Lieutenant Joyce boarded the Vengeance on her larboard quarter, taking the enraged Frenchman in the rear. Lieutenant Thornton, wishing to spare Pierre Gaudet's life, burst through all opposition, and, singling him out, disarmed him, and catching him by the collar, dragged him to the side.

"Curse you ! I know you," shouted Pierre Gaudet, striving to draw out a knife. "Set her on fire, drag out the plugs !" he roared amid the din, but Lieutenant Thornton tumbled him over the bulwarks. Desperately he clung to anything he could catch hold of.

"I wish to save your life, villain !" exclaimed our hero, "though you do not deserve any clemency ;" and, dragging Gaudet from his last hold, he threw him into the launch, and called to the men to surrender. There were five dead upon the deck, and several wounded. Bill was diving all before him with a handspike, having broken his cutlass. Several of the crew of the privateer threw themselves overboard, others surrendered, but a few desperate hands rushed below and fired the fore-cabin, which was, however, extinguished instantly, and preparations were then made for casting her loose, when it was discovered that she was chained to the shore, and the massive chain on board was riveted to a huge bolt.

"Now, Mr. Joyce, be ready," said our hero, "to set sail

the moment I hail you; I will go ashore and cast off this chain," and he leaped into the launch, followed by Bill and some half dozen of the men. Just then Captain O'Loughlin rowed up alongside, having previously sent the brig out with half-a-dozen hands in her.

Whilst Lieutenant Thornton was pulling towards the shore, Pierre Gaudet threw himself into the water, swam to the shore, or on board one of the fishing luggers near.

As the party in the launch pulled towards the beach they were assailed by a discharge of musketry from a large number of men drawn up on the shore.

"Now, Bill, give them a dose, and disperse them."

"Ay, ay, sir, I'll physic them," and bang went the twelve-pounder, loaded with grape, and well-directed, at the body of men drawn up under the rocks, and dispersing them in double quick time, leaving three of their number dead upon the beach.

"Load again, and keep them from closing," said our hero, springing ashore with his men, and seeking to find what the chain was fastened to.

The men who had fled rallied as soon as they had gained the shelter of the rocks, and again opened fire, the balls knocking up the sand all round the launch; but Bill was soon ready with another dose of grape, and dislodged them from their position.

Lieutenant Thornton, to his dismay, found the chain was riveted to an anchor, stuck in the sands, over a ton weight. Confounded at this contretemps, he was hesitating what to do, when he was hailed from the Vengeance, telling him they had cut away the deck with axes, and freed the ring-bolt to which the chain was fast, the enemy having, probably, in their hurry, hastily riveted the chain to a bolt, instead of taking a turn round the main-mast, and then riveting it. The Frenchmen, still from a distance, kept up a dropping fire upon our hero and his party; but, wading on board the launch, with only two men slightly wounded, they all returned on board the Vengeance.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"WE have her at last, by St. Patrick!" said Captain O'Loughlin, shaking our hero by the hand; "though I am sorry to say we have lost three men and seven hurt, three or four severely. You had a sharp fight on board here, I see. There are six poor fellows dead, and more than a dozen severely hurt with cutlass wounds. Confound those fellows ashore, they keep popping

away." As the Captain said the words, he stooped and picked up his hat, knocked off by a musket ball just as the lugger was dropping down the reach, under her fore-lug, with the down tide.

Putting all the enemy's wounded or hurt into the boats, they sent them on board the nearest fishing lugger, whose crew had pulled on shore. Sail was then made on the Vengeance, and, a fresh breeze blowing, they ran rapidly down the creek, Lieutenant Thornton steering, and keeping close to the west side of the inlet, thus avoiding the sunken rocks that lay along the other shore.

As they gained the open sea, they perceived the brig, with her fore-top sail aback, waiting for them. On running up alongside, the second mate of the Onyx, who had the command of her, said they had struck hard against a sunken rock in coming out, but that the brig did not appear to have received any damage, as she made no water; but they were at first afraid she would have remained fast.

"I told you, O'Loughlin," said Lieutenant Thornton, "to keep well to the westward, for the other day, at low water, I remarked a range of sunken rocks on the east side."

"By Jove! in the confusion I forgot your warning," returned Captain O'Loughlin; "however, our expedition has turned out well."

"They were evidently prepared for us," said our hero; "they suspected that an attack would be made on the privateer. And if they had fastened that chain round the main-mast, and riveted it, we should have had to set her on fire; for the anchor she was fastened to on shore by that ponderous chain was considerably over a ton."

"Yes, and besides that," returned the commander of the Onyx, "they evidently mistook the bolt to which they did fasten the chain; for close to it was a bolt that goes right through the main beam, and that we could not have cut out as we did the deck bolt."

"Had you much resistance on board the brig?"

"No, nothing to talk of; there were but fourteen men in her, and they evidently thought to get clear off during the night."

They were now close up with the Onyx, and Captain O'Loughlin and Lieutenant Thornton went on board. The commander of the corvette having seen to the care of his wounded, Captain O'Loughlin, our hero, and Lieutenant Pole proceeded to the cabin to obtain some refreshment after their certainly arduous undertaking.

"I tell you what you must do, dear friend," said O'Loughlin to the thoughtful Lieutenant Thornton, "you had better take the prizes to Portsmouth. You will be made a commander at once. Besides, Mr. Stanmore is most anxious for your return

to England; he told me there would not be the slightest difficulty in asserting your claims to the name and property of the late lamented Sir Oscar de Bracy. The document signed by my generous benefactor, and his will, being so very satisfactory."

Our hero did not reply for a moment, for in truth he was greatly distressed in mind.

"If I followed the bent of my mind, Patrick," he said, rousing himself from his sombre thoughts, "I should go ashore and endeavour to gain some intelligence of those so dear to me, and who no doubt are experiencing intense anxiety, for they must have heard the firing at Coulancourt, and guessed the cause of it. I do really think it possible I might escape detection."

"Then upon my conscience I do not," said Captain O'Loughlin, "you would surely lose your life. The captain of the Vengeance has escaped, you say; believe me he would sacrifice his life to take yours. Let me advise you to go to England. It is really your duty to do so. They may not be so badly off at the château as you imagine. Young Julian Arden is a fine high-spirited fellow; he will watch over their safety."

"I will take your advice, O'Loughlin," said our hero, gloomily, "because, as you say, it is my duty to do so, and to serve my country as long as this war lasts; but I shall do so with a heavy heart."

"I can imagine that such will be your feelings," said O'Loughlin, "but I really do not think this war will last long. France is no longer in the state it was; the people and their rulers are wearied of their bloody deeds. There is no danger of life to Madame Coulancourt; the worst that can happen will be confiscation of property; they will not imprison females for so trifling a crime as harbouring an Englishman, for they cannot convict them of attempting to escape; therefore do not look upon the gloomy side of the picture. As soon as day dawns we will set the Vengeance to rights, and do you run her into Portsmouth. I will put young Burdett in command of the brig. She has a valuable cargo, and is a handsome craft, and will no doubt be taken into the service. Burdett has passed his examination, and it will give him a lift."

To this arrangement Lieutenant Thornton consented, with a sigh of regret, some very bitter thoughts troubling his mind.

The three vessels were hove to till morning, the friends determining to sit up the remainder of the night conversing.

It was yet night, when a man's voice was heard hailing the ship. Lieutenant Pole called down to our hero to come up, as a small boat from the shore was hailing them.

Lieutenant Thornton sprang to his feet with eagerness, and ran up upon deck, followed by Captain O'Loughlin.

Our hero beheld a small boat, with a man and a boy in it pulling up alongside.

"Well, my man," said Lieutenant Thornton, addressing him, "do you bring any message from the shore?"

"Yes, monsieur, to you, I think," said the man, "as well as I can see by this light; are you the English officer that was at Château Coulaucourt?"

"I am, my man," returned our hero, "jump on board."

"Pardon, monsieur, I cannot delay to do that, for it is a mere piece of luck my seeing your ship, for I could not venture farther out in this crazy craft; here is a parcel and a letter from Monsieur Plessis. I must get back to the shore before daylight, or I shall be suspected."

Lieutenant Thornton eagerly took the packet and the letter, and tossing his purse to the man, containing four or five pounds in French gold coins, he said—

"Keep that, mon ami; I wish I had more to give you. Tell Monsieur Plessis that we are all well here."

"Mercie, monsieur," said the man, pocketing the purse, "I will be sure to tell him; and I wish you well. I am not injuring my country by serving the best mistress the poor of this country ever had," and without further delay he and the lad took to their oars, and pulled in lustily for the shore.

"Come, this is fortunate, my dear friend," said Captain O'Loughlin, "you will no doubt gain some intelligence of those you are so anxious about."

"I trust I shall," said Lieutenant Thornton; "come with me to the cabin, Patrick, and I will tell you what Monsieur Jean Plessis says."

Retiring to the cabin, our hero took the covering from the paper parcel, which was bulky and securely fastened, within which was a second bundle of papers carefully tied together, and on the top a letter addressed to himself. It was from Monsieur Plessis, and was as follows:—

"Dear Sir,

"Enclosed you have all the papers relative to Mademoiselle Arden's birth, her mother's marriage, &c. I have not a moment to spare for explanation, but if you can keep off and on the harbour of Havre for six or eight days, I think I have a scheme for escape planned that will succeed. Keep a sharp look-out for a chasse-mare, that will carry a red flag hoisted on her foremast. If in eight days you do not fall in with such, you may conclude I have failed. Still be under no apprehension, for I have a powerful friend in Monsieur Barras, the director, and madame and family will be safe, though perhaps her fortune may suffer. The papers enclosed will establish

Mademoiselle's and Monsieur Julian's claims to any property by will or otherwise. I write in extreme haste and uncertainty, for even now I hear the guns in the creek, pealing each moment in the air, and I am aware that a desperate contest is taking place, but I can and have anticipated the result.

"Yours devotedly,

"JEAN PLESSIS."

"Be the immortal powers," said Captain O'Loughlin, "that Jean Plessis is a trump. He anticipated the result of the contest, you see; he knew we should succeed, and he prepared this letter."

"What's to be done," said Lieutenant Thornton, looking up anxiously, "for I know you cannot stay on this coast so long? You are already several days over your time."

"I think we can manage it very easily," said O'Loughlin. "I must sail and join Colpoys as directed; but I can put the Vengeance to rights in four hours; and leave you fifteen men and young Burdett. Four men and the second mate will run the brig to Portsmouth easily enough. There's not a craft on the coast can come near the Vengeance for speed; her bottom has not been injured, and she spreads more canvas now than before. If Vice-Admiral Colpoys is still off Isle Dieu, I shall be able, on stating the circumstances, to get leave to return and render you any aid you may require; I can be back, if no untoward event occurs, in three days."

"Nothing can be better," said Lieutenant Thornton, joyfully. "The Vengeance has some of her guns on board, but no stores."

"Never mind that, I can give you plenty; we have only to step your mizen-mast, and put you some ammunition and provisions on board, and you will do famously. If Jean Plessis fails, which I trust he will not, you must sail for England, report yourself, and you will be made a commander, mark my words. This success in cutting out the Vengeance will make a noise. I will just give orders to run farther off the coast, so that our proceedings may not be observed."

On ascending upon deck, they perceived that it would soon be dawn, with a fresh breeze off shore, so making a signal to the Vengeance and the brig, they stood out to sea, and just as the sun rose they were beyond observation from the land.

Sending a party of men on board the Vengeance, Captain O'Loughlin and our hero followed. The brig, with the second mate and four men, in half-an-hour was under weigh for Portsmouth, and young Burdett remained with our hero.

On examining the Vengeance in the broad daylight, they were surprised at her size and accommodation. She was nearly

as long as the corvette, with more beam in proportion. They could perceive by the new work where the fire had ceased its ravages. She had suffered more in her spars and rigging and sails than in her hull. Her cabin was large and fitted up for hard service, more attention being paid to its affording accommodation to the numerous officers generally on board privateers, all messing together, than with any pretensions to elegance. The main cabin was the principal store room; it was at this time full of odds and ends—ropes, blocks, muskets, pistols, pikes, and every kind of privateering material, all in confusion. She was above two hundred tons burden, and carried immense spars.

In three hours everything was altered; the mizen-mast was stepped, the disordered and bloody deck washed, the rigging set up, and the cabin put into ship-shape. Two eight-pounders, and two long eighteen-pound carronades were placed ready for service; the rest of her guns were in her hold, and there they were left, fifteen men being too few to work any more than were on deck. After a few more arrangements had been completed, and the two friends had finally matured their plans, Master Burdett came on board with Bill Saunders, who was to be first mate, gunner, and to fill several other situations besides. The Commander of the *Onyx* bade his old comrade and friend farewell.

"If we do not again encounter here, we shall, I trust, meet ere long in England. My time will be soon up; so, dear friend, farewell, and God send you may fall in with those you are so deeply anxious about!"

Charles Pole had also come to bid good-bye, and the three friends parted.

The *Onyx*, under every stitch of canvas she could carry, stood away to the westward, whilst the *Vengeance* remained hove to, the crew busily employed settling and arranging their stores, ammunition, &c., and with her commander, making themselves as comfortable as possible. There was no happier man on board than Bill Saunders. The two eighteen-pound carronades became his special favourites, and his first object was to get them into effective operation, should they be wanted, and to select his men to work them.

He besides considered himself a kind of cabin attendant, steward, and butler, and entered into several arrangements with Master Burdett, who seemed to be a favourite of his, as to the future victualling department.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LEAVING the Vengeance to keep watch off the Port of Havre, a thing at that period not at all a hazardous affair, whilst Vice-Admiral Colpoys was with his fleet off Brest or Isle Dieu, and few if any French vessels of war showed out of their harbours, we return to Château Coulancourt.

Rather more than an hour after the departure of our hero and Bill Saunders for Lyon Head, Jean Plessis returned from Havre, looking anxious and thoughtful as he proceeded towards that part of the château inhabited by Madame Coulancourt and her daughter, and entered the saloon where he found mother, son, and daughter, and his own daughter, all conversing earnestly upon their intended plan of escape.

"Where is Monsieur Thornton?" inquired Jean Plessis, looking at Julian, who was nursing his leg on a chair, in a state of great vexation at not having been able to accompany his friend.

"He went to the sand hills and Lyon Head," replied Julian. "This stupid leg of mine keeps me here. Have you heard anything alarming, Monsieur Plessis, or that annoys you? You look very thoughtful."

Mabel turned her eloquent eyes anxiously upon the intendant, as he answered—

"Why, yes. I have heard intelligence that makes me wish Monsieur Thornton had not gone out to-day. I will send Joseph, the gardener's grandson, this minute after him, to tell him to come back."

"What alarms you, Monsieur Plessis?" said Mabel. "Mon Dieu! I hope nothing serious——"

"Nay," interrupted the intendant, soothingly. "I do not feel alarmed at all, but merely anxious to let Monsieur Thornton know what I heard to-day, and to put him on his guard. I was told when in Havre that an English frigate or corvette was seen close in with the coast off Lyon Head this morning, and that some days before a very fine armed brig was chased by that vessel, but that, aided by a thick fog, the brig got into Palos Creek, and was at anchor in the pool, where the Vengeance lies. Ten or twelve of the coast-guard had at once set out for Lyon Head, at the instigation of some person residing with Monsieur Gramont who is at Rouen, and thirty or forty men belonging to an infantry regiment were to march for Palos Creek, to protect the Vengeance and the brig, should this frigate discover them to be within the creek. It would be just as well that Monsieur Thornton did not meet or fall in with the coast-guard."

"Then do not lose a moment," cried both mother and daughter, anxiously, "in sending Joseph; he can run through the village, which is a mile shorter, and probably overtake him."

"Deuce take my leg, I was going to say!" said Julian, with a flush on his cheek from vexation; "but I mean deuce take the stone that caused me to sprain my ankle. Now that I might be of service I'm no more use than an old woman!"

"But old women are sometimes very useful, Monsieur Julian," returned Julia, with a smile, and a look at the handsome speaker, trying to rouse the mother and daughter from their sombre thoughts.

"I perfectly agree with you, mademoiselle," answered Julian. "So they are, provided they are not guardians to very pretty grand-daughters, then they are no longer old women, but dragons. Ah, here is your father again. You have dispatched Joseph?"

"Yes, I made him take the post pony; he will go the quicker," replied the intendant. "I have not mentioned my plans to you as yet, madame," continued Jean Plessis, turning to the Duchess, "because I was not quite certain I could carry them out, but now I think I can effect what we wish."

"I felt certain," observed Madame Coulancourt, in reply, "that you were planning something, by your frequent visits to Havie."

"Yes, madame, you have conjectured correctly. It will not do to remain too long here whilst Monsieur Gramont is, with his spies, watching our movements."

"Spies!" repeated Julian; "then you suspect this Gramont is watching us?"

"Yes, Monsieur Julian; I do. There is a very suspicious person residing in his château—a most repulsive-looking man, I am told—and I know very well that Monsieur Gramont's bland manner and specious speeches are not to be depended on."

"I always said so," exclaimed Mabel, her eyes sparkling; "I detest that man."

"What have you been about at Havre, Jean?" inquired Madame Coulancourt.

"Suspecting something might occur that no one could foresee, I wrote to Monsieur Barras, telling him that, for certain reasons, madame wished to return to Paris, with Mademoiselle de Tourville, and I requested him to send me a written order, signed by Fouché, that she and her party should be permitted to proceed to Paris in whatever way she pleased. I received an answer to this effect:—'Madame Coulancourt shall have a protection, signed by Fouché and myself, so that no person will

dare, after seeing that order, to molest her or the persons with her ; but money is scarce, and, between ourselves, Fouché requires his pen to be gilded—send an order for twenty thousand francs, and you will have the safe conduct back by your messenger.’ ”

“ What a despicable character ! ” cried Julian, indignantly, “ for a ruler of France.”

“ True,” returned Jean Plessis ; “ but at this moment, if Barras was not one of the three directors, it might be embarrassing to your mother. I did not consult you, madame,” continued Jean Plessis, looking at the ex-Duchess.

“ There was no need, my kind friend,” replied Madame Coulancourt ; “ you sent the money, of course ? ”

“ I sent an order, madame, for the sum, by a trusty messenger, yesterday ; and now I will unfold to you my plans, which may readily be combined with those of Monsieur Thornton. With a passport signed by Barras and Fouché, no one dares obstruct us. I have engaged the captain of a fast-sailing *chasse-mare*—he is a smuggler, I confess, but that does not matter—who is apparently to take us to Rouen. We shall sail in the day as if for Rouen, and when some miles up the river, he will come to an anchor. In the night, he will up anchor, and drop down with the tide, and put to sea ; and if this English vessel of war is the one Monsieur Thornton expects, the smuggler will place us all on board ; if not, he engages to land us safely on the coast of England.”

“ This is an admirable idea,” said Julian ; “ but how shall we manage—that is, Lieutenant Thornton and myself ? ”

“ That is easily arranged. You will go on to a place I will fix upon, before us ; and there we will pick you up. As Philip de Tourville, your cousin will, of course, be included in the passport.”

Some further conversation then ensued, and time passed on, till Mabel became anxious concerning the return of Lieutenant Thornton. It was getting late when Julia beheld Joseph galloping the pony up the avenue leading to the back of the château.

“ There is Joseph, and seemingly in a hurry,” she exclaimed, running out to hear the news, her father and Julian hastily following. The boy had just dismounted in the yard ; his face was flushed, and his manner quite excited.

“ Well, boy,” asked Monsieur Plessis, “ did you see Monsieur de Tourville ? ”

“ Oui, monsieur, I did,” said the lad ; “ but I arrived near the head only time enough to behold a party of the coast-guard running down the side ; getting off the pony, I hastened to the edge of the cliff, to see what the men were running after, and then, all of a sudden I heard a cannon, and then musket shots,

and by the time I got to a place to see what was going on, the coast-guard were running away, dragging a wounded man with them; and below, I saw a boat with several persons in it, and I recognised Monsieur de Tourville's man; and off at sea, about a mile, I saw a large ship. I watched the boat, and saw them pull out to the ship, and then, as I could see or do nothing more, I returned to you as fast as I could."

Julian Arden and Julia had listened to this account of the lad with both surprise and alarm; and then the latter ran to let Mabel and Madame Coulancourt know that, at all events, Lieutenant Thornton and Bill had got safe on board the corvette. Luckily, the lad had not seen Bill carrying the insensible body of his master; therefore, Mabel's feelings were spared much anxiety.

"Oh," exclaimed mother and daughter, "what an escape! Then they actually fired upon them; this proves they were watched, and suspected of having communication with the English vessel of war. Who knows what may be the consequence of this untoward affair?"

Anxious to hear what Jean Plessis thought of this event, they proceeded to the saloon. The intendant was himself disturbed; he had questioned the boy minutely, and he allowed he did not recognise Monsieur de Tourville in the boat; but he was certain he saw Bill, or, as he called him, Pierre Bompert. All the sailors in the boat wore white trousers, short jackets, and glazed hats; therefore he could clearly distinguish the tall figure of Bill.

Jean Plessis was puzzled; if Bill got safe into the boat, surely so did Lieutenant Thornton; then he suddenly recollected the man the coast-guard men were carrying. "Did you see the wounded man?" he demanded.

"Yes," returned Joseph, "the wounded man was the gentleman who lives with Monsieur Gramont. I am sure of that, for I saw his long beard and great bushy eyebrows."

This assertion relieved Monsieur Plessis' anxiety with respect to the safety of Lieutenant Thornton; who, amongst the crew in the boat, he supposed, escaped the boy's notice. Still it proved to him that Philip de Tourville was discovered to be an Englishman; Julian had better, therefore, get out of the way, for fear of a search for him.

"This is a most unfortunate affair, Jean," said Madame Coulancourt, as the intendant entered the saloon, looking serious and perplexed.

"It is unfortunate, madame," replied Monsieur Plessis, "so far as it may draw on us the attention of Monsieur Gramont, who is expected home to-day, to the château; but it is fortunate that Lieutenant Thornton has escaped."

"But," said Mabel, eagerly, "suppose he attempts to land again; his life would be endangered."

"He will not attempt to do that, depend upon it, mademoiselle, after the escape he had; but I think it not at all unlikely that this night the crew of the corvette will attempt to sink or burn the Vengeance and the brig in Palos Pool. They cannot cut the former out; for I understand she can be fastened by an immense chain to a huge anchor, if they think any danger is to be apprehended."

"Will any suspicion be attached to us, do you think, Jean?"

"It is very possible Monsieur Gramont may pay us a visit, madame," answered the intendant, thoughtfully; "therefore I really think if Monsieur Julian was to go to Dulong, where he could remain, or cross over to the village on the other side, and wait till we came up the river, it would be better."

"I can easily do that in my assumed name of Louis Lebeau," returned Julian; "but is there any need of my separating from those I would fain stay to protect?"

"My dear boy," said the anxious mother, "having once more pressed you to my heart, let me not have the agony of again losing you. You could not render us the slightest service. When this passport has arrived from Monsieur Barras, we may consider ourselves safe from this Monsieur Gramont, whose design is, I am sure, to possess himself of Coulancourt by exciting suspicion against me."

"If I had an opportunity, and I found him plotting against your happiness, or seeking to betray you into the hands of the Government, I would put a pistol to his head," exclaimed Julian, with impetuosity.

"Do not be rash, dear Julian," said Mabel, putting her arm round her brother's neck; "far better leave us to the care of good Monsieur Plessis, who has hitherto protected us with such marvellous devotedness and courage. Suppose suspicion is excited, and they send to search the château, what a terrible blow it would be to us all to see you arrested, carried off, and imprisoned. You must spare us that sorrow, dear Julian."

"God knows, dear Mabel, I should think little of life, if, by sacrificing it, I ensured my beloved mother and you a certainty of happiness and safety."

"Then suppose you proceed to Dulong at once on the pony," said Jean Plessis. "If this alarm passes off, in two or three days at the furthest, we shall be ready to embark in the chasse-mare for Rouen. I can say madame prefers going as far as possible towards Paris by water, on account of that affair of the robbers, which frightened her from travelling that road

again, especially as the country is really said to be infested with robbers."

"Well, though it grieves me to leave you both," said Julian, "I will, as soon as it is dusk, set off for Dulong. Joseph will bring back the pony and let me know then how things go on, and whether they succeed in burning the Vengeance; I feel sure Thornton will make the attempt."

Mabel's cheek grew pale; she did not like to believe in the cutting-out business, though she probably felt it was just the kind of adventure her lover would like, especially against the Vengeance, having heard him often say — "If I could only destroy that craft, I should feel great satisfaction. Her brute of a captain richly deserves punishment; but on account of his relationship to Dame Moret, I should do all I could to preserve his life."

Julian Arden, seeing it would make his mother's and sister's minds easy, determined to proceed to Dulong for the night. He therefore, after an affectionate leave-taking, mounted the pony, taking Joseph for a guide.

It was well he did so; for scarcely an hour after his departure, the inhabitants of the château were alarmed by hearing the tramp of horses' feet, both at the front and back of the mansion. It was Sergeant Perrin, with twelve mounted gendarmes.

"Ah! my beloved child," said Madame Coulangcourt, "I thought this affair would not pass off so easily. Thank God, Julian has got out of the way! Had he stayed, he would have been arrested."

Whilst mother and daughter, and Julia Plessis were waiting in anxious suspense, Jean Plessis, followed by Sergeant François Perrin, entered the room.

"Sorry to disturb you, madame," said the sergeant, civilly; "I am only obeying the orders of Monsieur le Maire. At the same time he has requested me to say that you need not be under any alarm, as he has no intention of disturbing you or your family. My orders are to search the château for a person calling himself Louis Lebeau, who has been traced to this mansion. There is every reason to believe that this Louis Lebeau is an Englishman and a spy; and my orders are to arrest him, and to place a guard round this house during the night."

Though Madame Coulangcourt knew she was very pale, she replied, calmly—

"You are at perfect liberty to search the château, Monsieur le Sergeant."

The sergeant bowed.

"May I request, madame, to see this young lady's brother, Monsieur Philip de Tourville?"

Madame Coulancourt and Mabel looked at each other, and then at Jean Plessis, with a feeling of intense vexation and dismay ; but Monsieur Plessis very quietly said—

“You should have come yesterday, Sergeant Perrin ; Monsieur de Tourville is gone, and we intend in a day or two to proceed, by water, as far as madame can conveniently travel, on our way to Paris.”

“Oh ! Monsieur de Tourville is gone, is he ? ” said Sergeant Perrin, without a change of countenance ; “I was only desired to inquire if he was at the château. Did he take that worthy man Pierre Bompert with him ? ”

“Certainly,” returned Monsieur Plessis. “Would you wish to refresh yourself and men, sergeant, after your long ride ? ”

“I shall have no objection,” said the sergeant, civilly ; “and if madame will order a chamber for the use of myself and men for the night, I shall feel obliged ; it is not my wish or that of Monsieur le Maire to put the family to any inconvenience. No doubt in the morning Monsieur Gramont will have the pleasure of visiting madame himself, and set all things to rights.”

So saying, Sergeant Perrin followed Monsieur Plessis and Julia from the chamber.

For a moment mother and daughter sat without uttering a word, each busy with her own thoughts. Mabel was thinking what a lucky escape her brother and lover had had ; and Madame Coulancourt was reflecting upon the many sorrows she had experienced, and dismayed at the thought of the trials apparently before her.

“How very fortunate and providential,” said Mabel, coming close to her mother’s side, and taking her hand in hers with fond affection, “that our dear Julian got away before these horrid men came to look for him.”

There were tears in the mother’s eyes as she bent down and kissed the pale cheek of her loving child.

“I could wish, my beloved girl,” said madame, “that you had remained in happy England, great as has been my delight in pressing you to my heart after years of separation. Yet I would that you were there, and not exposed to the chances of detection.”

“Dear, dear mother,” interrupted Mabel, earnestly and fondly, “why regret that which has given so much happiness to me ? My life would have been miserable when once I knew the possibility of rejoining you. I fear neither captivity nor privation ; I have but one wish—to live and die with you.”

“And where is poor William to look for consolation ? ” said the mother, parting the hair from her daughter’s fair brow as it rested on her shoulder ; “is there not a little nook in

that fond heart that beats in unison with his? Does no thought of his agony, if he thought you were torn from him for ever, touch your heart?"

"Ah! dear William," said the fair girl, her cheeks glowing and her heart throbbing with the excitement of her feelings, "dear William knows all the love that woman can give to the object of her heart's choice is given to him; but there is no selfish feeling in his noble soul. He is quite as capable of sacrificing all the fondest wishes of his heart, if thereby he could secure your safety and happiness."

"I know it, Mabel; a strong conviction of confidence and affection stole over me the very first time I looked into his fine youthful features. I confided you to his care with a feeling of trust and security, that, though young as he was, he would risk life to fulfil the confidence reposed in him; and nobly and faithfully he followed up his word."

"I cannot retire to rest to-night," said Mabel; "I feel such a painful anxiety respecting the attempt that may be made to destroy that detestable Vengeance. If there was any firing in Palos Creek, we should hear it here distinctly, should we not?"

"Yes, on a fine night like this," said Madame Coulandcourt. Just then Julia entered.

"What have you done, dear Julia," said Madame Coulandcourt, "with our troublesome guests?"

"Eh! mon Dieu! they are troublesome," said Julia. "They have posted sentinels within twenty yards of each other round the château, whilst the sergeant and the rest who will relieve the guard have settled themselves and their weapons in the lower hall. I have ordered them refreshments. Sergeant Perrin is very polite and agreeable, and by no means taciturn. He says there are forty or fifty men, besides coast guards, gone down to Palos Creek to watch, lest an attempt should be made on the Vengeance. They would have taken her up the creek to Grantain, but it is low neap-tides, and she draws too much water; so they have chained her to a huge anchor, nearly two tons weight, and riveted the chains. Captain Pierre Gaudet swears he will burn or blow her up before the English shall have her."

"Ah!" said Mabel, her cheeks flushing, though she shuddered as she spoke; "if William has determined to take her, he will do so; but I trust in God he will not attempt it, for many lives must be lost, I dread to think it, on both sides."

CHAPTER XXXV.

NEITHER Mabel nor Madame Coulancourt, when they retired to rest that night, undressed, for they fully expected to be roused by the sounds of contention from Palos Creek. Mabel remained with her mother, and both, leaving their lamp burning, lay down as they were. Just before midnight the loud, dull sound of a heavy gun in the direction of the creek caused both ladies to jump up and listen; they threw up their window, which looked in the direction of the firing, and then came plainly enough the sounds of discharges of musketry, and the loud boom of the twelve-pound carronade.

"Oh, Heavens! how quick the discharges of musketry are," said Mabel, trembling all over; "what a terrible fight they must have!"

"O God, protect those we love!" fervently uttered both mother and daughter; "and inspire them with mercy to their enemies. It's frightful to think of men defacing God's own image by slaying each other, and without our real feeling of individual animosity."

"Ah, mother, rulers of states have a terrible responsibility to answer for, when they arm their poor subjects to slay and destroy other human beings, from some paltry political feeling. There goes the great gun again!"

A knock at the door interrupted the conversation.

"'Tis I, Mabel," said the voice of Julia.

Mabel ran and opened the door; Julia was dressed.

"Mon Dieu!" said Mademoiselle Plessis, "what firing down at the creek; my father has been writing this half-hour. Sergeant Perrin has gone down to the sea-shore, he could not resist; he has left only two men on guard. My father is sure they will either cut out the ships or burn them; if they burn them, we shall see the glare in the heavens. My father is going to an old fisherman, who would risk his life for him, to get him to take out a letter and a packet of important papers to give Lieutenant Thornton, in which he has stated his plan of escape, so that the lieutenant may co-operate if practicable. The old fisherman will steal out in his boat, and, if possible, deliver the packet; if not, he will bring it safe back. Tomorrow my father will make you fully acquainted with what he has done. He has gone out by a door, left unguarded by the departure of the men, and will bring us back word how the contest ends."

It was, in truth, a night of deep anxiety to all; and not till long after the firing had ceased did any of the inhabitants of the château retire to rest. Monsieur Plessis, however, returned before Sergeant Perrin.

In the morning, as the family re-assembled at breakfast, jaded with the watching and anxiety of the past night, Julia informed the mother and daughter that the *Vengeance* and the brig had been both carried off by the English, after a desperate resistance. That there were nine or ten killed, on board and on shore, of the crew of the *Vengeance*, and amongst the soldiers. Captain Gaudet was not hurt, but furious and frantic at the loss of the vessel, which he imputed to the conduct of the soldiers, and the cowardice of the captain of the brig—attempting to run out instead of anchoring his vessel with her broadside to the entrance, and firing into the boats as they came up. My father heard that one or two of the English had been killed, and some wounded, but no officer hurt; that the fisherman had delivered his letter and the packet into the hands of Lieutenant Thornton himself, who bade him say all were well."

A glow spread over the pale cheek of Mabel at this intelligence, though she deeply mourned the loss of life.

"Where is your father, Julia?" demanded Madame Coulan court, anxiously.

"He and my mother went early in the calash to Havre. He expects his messenger to-day from Paris by the mail-post, and my mother went with him to make some necessary arrangements. They will be back in the evening, and the day after to-morrow he thinks we may leave Coulaucourt."

"God grant it!" said the mother.

"What did Sergeant Perrin do down at the creek last night, did you hear him speak about it, Julia?"

"For a wonder, madame, he did not say a word, and seems very sulky. They are all sorely vexed at the cutting out of the *Vengeance*. I am going directly to Dame Moret, and very probably I shall see her son, and he surely will be able to tell us all the particulars; for the English did not touch or injure the fishing luggers, but put all the prisoners and wounded into them. I overheard one of the gendarmes saying to Sergeant Perrin, that the English crew and their leader that boarded the *Vengeance*, under a frightful fire from on board and on shore, were diables. That they were only about fifteen or sixteen men at first, that they cut down all before them, and that their leader—Lieutenant Thornton, I fancy—burst through all opposition and seized Captain Gaudet, who would otherwise have perished, and dragged him off, throwing him into the boats alongside, so that he might swim ashore or get on board the nearest boat."

"That officer was surely our own dear friend," said Mabel; "he said if ever he captured the *Vengeance* he would spare Captain Gaudet, though he did treat him and Bill Saunders most cruelly."

"We may expect this Monsieur Gramont here to-day," said Madame Coulancourt.

"Yes, madame," said Julia; "so Sergeant Perrin tells me."

"Then I will take very good care to keep out of his way," said Mabel: "for I am sure it is owing to his schemes that we have been molested."

Leaving the inmates of Château Coulancourt in a rather troubled and apprehensive state of mind, we beg our readers to follow us into an apartment of the mansion inhabited by Monsieur Gramont.

Stretched on a bed, in a remote chamber of the house, lay Augustine Vadier; his right eye had been knocked out by a splinter of rock, and although the piece had been extracted, and the wound bound up by a surgeon from Havre, the eye was gone for ever, and there was considerable danger from inflammation. Notwithstanding this severe visitation and suffering, Augustine Vadier showed no kind of remorse for his past crimes, or evinced any symptoms of regret; on the contrary, his passion and vexation at being the only one wounded, and the escape of the person he intended to entrap, rendered the fever much worse.

"Has Monsieur Gramont arrived?" demanded Vadier of the sulky domestic that attended to his wants.

"He has not," returned the man, "but he will be here before mid-day; he slept at Havre."

"So those sacre Anglais have cut out the vessels in Palos Creek," muttered Vadier, with a smothered execration; "this would not have occurred if that lazy rascal, the coast-guard, had followed my directions. We should have entrapped that English spy, who was here amongst those traitors at the Château Coulancourt, for the purpose of prying into the situation of the Vengeance. If, instead of watching the movements of the corvette, they had posted themselves on the sand-hills, they would have secured them all. Curse them! I am the only sufferer."

"Wouldn't care if they had settled you out and out," muttered the man to himself. "Ah! there is Monsieur Gramont riding into the yard."

"Prop me up with pillows," said the sick man, "for he will be with me directly."

The domestic did so, grumbling at having an office put upon him that an old woman would have done better.

"Yes, rascal," exclaimed the irritated invalid, "le diable, for for that matter, would do better than you, thankless scoundrel; your master shall hear of your insolence."

"I don't care who hears of it," said the man, walking away. "You promised me five hundred francs for making Dedan a spy on her mistress, where are they?"

A few minutes afterwards Bertram Gramont, in his riding-dress, entered the chamber, closing the door after him.

"Here's a pretty mess you have got yourself into," said the maire, throwing himself into a chair by the bedside. "Did I not tell you to take things quietly till my return? and now here you are with your eye knocked out; and worse, our prey escaped, when I have an order from Fouché, the Minister of Police, to arrest the whole party, and send them prisoners to Paris. I may almost consider the Coulancourt estate as mine."

"I acted for the best," growled Augustine Vadier; "that cursed Englishman, Lieutenant Thornton, who is the very same who had the care of the casket in Toulon, was preparing to escape with that other Englishman living under the name of Lebeau. Who he is I cannot imagine; Madame Coulancourt has had him concealed in the château, and I was told was seen embracing him."

"The diable!" interrupted Bertram Gramont, with a start. "Not a lover, surely, at her age, and with such a youth; are you sure of this, Vadier? I really am sorry to hear that you will lose the sight of your eye."

"Lose the sight! Curse it, man, it's knocked clean out," exclaimed Vadier; "but if I can get on my legs soon, I will manage with the other. I am sure of what I say," continued the wounded man. "They little suspect that their servant-girl, one of old Dame Moret's farm domestics, is a spy upon them."

"What induced you to attempt to entrap this Englishman before my return?" asked Monsieur Gramont.

"Because I found out that this Lieutenant Thornton and this Louis Lebeau, whose Christian name is, however, Julian——"

"Julian! Julian!" repeated Bertram Gramont, with a start. "By the saints, I have it! No, no, he's no lover. Julian! Yes, that's the name of Madame Coulancourt's son, supposed to have been killed amongst the good people of Lyons at the time D'Herbois shot them down like rooks. I trust Sergeant Perrin has secured him, at all events?"

"Not he; that cursed Jean Plessis is too wide awake for that. He's gone—where, I can't say—but he left the château on a pony last night with a boy called Joseph."

"Then he will be easily traced, so all is right there. How did you contrive to get this girl to betray the secrets of a mistress so well loved as Madame Coulancourt? I suppose you made love to her."

"Not such a fool as that," muttered Vadier. "You can never lay aside your jokes, not even when your deepest interests are concerned."

"Possibly not, mon ami," returned Monsieur le Maire, with a laugh, "it's not very long ago since it was the fashion to

bandy bon mots with the executioner, when he was adjusting your head for that interesting receptacle, the box under the guillotine. However, you see," continued Monsieur Gramont, "one of the consequences of your interfering is that this Lieutenant Thornton, who was one of those who failed in cutting out the Vengeance in Havre Roads, tried it again last night, and, by Jove, he has got her, and the Hermaphrodite armed brig, of Bourdeaux, with a valuable cargo. If you had left him alone till my return, this would have been prevented."

"How so?" returned Vadier. "I do not see that; for he and that pretended Pierre Bompert were evidently seeking to communicate with the corvette when I thought to entrap them."

"Yes, I admit that, mon ami; but they were not intending to go on board then. My idea is, and I am persuaded I am right, that they were merely communicating with the corvette, planning an escape for Madame Coulangcourt and her daughter; so my return with the order for the arrest of the whole party would have struck a fatal blow to their projects, and saved both the Vengeance and the brig."

"And what do you intend doing now?" demanded Vadier. "I have the false deeds quite ready, and the late duke's signatures, &c., all complete."

"I am going now—at least in half an hour—to the château; Sergeant Perrin went there last night by my orders, to keep watch. I will make a proposal to Madame Coulangcourt, which if she does not accept, I will enforce the order for their arrest, and send them to Paris. She must be found guilty of plotting with the enemies of France, and by-the-by, this affair of the Vengeance will, after all, implicate her most forcibly, as she permitted an English officer to reside in her mansion, under an assumed name, and passed off her own daughter as a Mademoiselle de Tourville. I think, Augustine, I have a good head for plotting. Once convicted of this charge, which she cannot possibly refute, her estate will be confiscated, and then I intend producing my deeds and the late duke's revocal of his former will; with the interest I possess when I shall, no doubt, be put in possession of the property. Strange to say I could not get Fouché to give me an order to arrest that confounded Jean Plessis. 'No,' said the Minister of Police, 'he is a protégé of Barras; let him alone.'"

"Curse him!" fiercely exclaimed Vadier. "Then I will stick a knife in him. I hate that man; he was the chief witness against me when I was condemned in Paris to the galleys. I'll have my revenge of him."

"Very proper," said Monsieur Gramont, "but get well first; you look feverish, and exciting yourself is bad."

"Humph!" muttered Vadier. "I wish you would give me

the five hundred francs for that rascal Dubois; he is growling like a bear—he wants to marry that girl Dedan, at the château, and she is getting frightened for fear of being found out.”

“Confound the rascal! let him wait. I have not five hundred to spare, *mon cher*, just yet; and as to the girl, serve her right if she is found out. We require neither of them now.”

“Then send off that sulky rascal Dubois; he handles me as if I was a bear.”

“*Ma foi*, with that hairy face of yours you are not unlike one,” said Monsieur Gramont. “The time is past now, or else I would despatch the rascal to prison as a royalist, and have his head off. As it is, I will send him about his business this moment—the easiest way of paying the five hundred francs. Now I must leave you; keep up your spirits, you will soon be on your legs; the loss of an eye will not spoil your beauty, and your other optic will gain redoubled force. I shall be back in the evening.”

“Ah!” muttered Augustine Vadier, bitterly, sinking back on the bed, “thus it always is with tools; but take care, Monsieur Gramont, I am a dangerous tool to cast aside as worthless.”

Monsieur Gramont was just the kind of man to neglect any one but himself. Selfish, heartless, and unprincipled, he felt for no one; he befriended the wretch Vadier, because he was a most expert forger, and because he knew he knew a secret or two of his late father's, better hidden than disclosed. He wanted him no further, so he then thought, and in reality he was rather grieved that the splinter of the rock did not finish him entirely, instead of merely putting out his eye. Changing his dress, and making the most of his really handsome person, Bertram Gramont mounted his horse, and set out alone for Château Coulancourt.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ON reaching the mansion, Monsieur Gramont's first interview was with Sergeant Perrin in the lower hall.

“So you missed seizing the person of Louis Lebeau?” said the Maire to the sergeant.

“Yes, Monsieur Gramont, we did; he was certainly not in the château, and you did not give us further instructions than to search the house, and keep a careful guard, which we did.”

“Till you heard the firing, sergeant, down at Palos Creek, and then you left only two of the men to keep watch—eh, *mon ami*?”

“Well, Monsieur le Maire, I thought I ought, under the cir-

cumstances, to see if we could be of any service in driving off those diables Anglais, but they had a heavy gun loaded with grape."

"Never mind, sergeant; I am aware that grape is not easy of digestion, so you prudently retired."

"Non, ma foi, monsieur, not till the Vengeance was fairly out of the creek. The coast-guard would not face the gun, and three men were killed and a great many wounded amongst the soldiers."

"Bien, as that cannot be remedied, let us talk of what we have on hand; send one of your men for a lad called Joseph, belonging to this establishment."

In a few minutes one of the men returned with the gardener's grandson, who looked very frightened.

"Where did you go, my lad," inquired Monsieur Gramont, "yesterday evening, just after dusk?"

The boy looked all round him for help, he grew pale, and remained silent.

"Oh!" said Monsieur Gramont, "are you another dummy? Do you know, if you do not find your tongue, I will find a most effectual restorer of speech."

A friend stepped into the chamber to the great relief of the culprit, with an easy, unembarrassed countenance, and faced Monsieur Gramont without flinching; this friend to Joseph was pretty Julia Plessis.

"You frighten the lad, Monsieur Gramont," said Julia, patting the boy's head; "don't be alarmed, Joseph, tell Monsieur le Maire that you did what you were told to do, and obeyed your mistress."

"I should be sorry, mademoiselle," said Bertram Gramont, "to do anything displeasing to Madame Coulancourt. So I will let this lad go about his business, as it matters very little his confirmation of a fact. I am aware he went to guide or bring back a pony, one on which Louis Lebeau left this château. Perhaps, mademoiselle, you could tell me where the said Louis Lebeau went to."

"Really, Monsieur Gramont," returned Julia demurely, "you seem so very well informed of the movements of all here, that any information from me would be idle."

"Well, then, mademoiselle, I will not trouble you, except with a message to Madame Coulancourt. Will you be so good as to say I shall feel gratified if she will favour me with an interview? I request this as a favour, not as a duty that I have to perform."

"Certainly, Monsieur Gramont," said Julia; "if you will please to come into the saloon I will inform madame of your request."

"Is your father in the château, mademoiselle?" said Monsieur le Maire, as Julia ushered him into the principal saloon.

"No, monsieur; he went early this morning to Havre," so saying she retired.

Monsieur Gramont stood facing the portrait of the late Duke de Coulancourt with a thoughtful and serious expression on his features; he was not at all repenting the injustice he contemplated, far from it; but he was thinking, at the moment, that it was very possible that France might return at no distant time to a monarchical form of government; and if so, would it not be possible to gain the defunct title as well as the estate? Monsieur Gramont was fond of "castle building;" it is very pleasant at times, but, unfortunately, we are apt to be recalled rather suddenly and disagreeably to this dull earth and its sad realities. Monsieur Gramont was startled out of his day dreams by the entrance of Madame Coulancourt.

Now that it was come to the point to carry out his intended project, he felt somewhat embarrassed; there was a conscious dignity, a stately and impressive loftiness of character visible in every word and movement of the ex-Duchesse de Coulancourt that had its effect upon him, and after the first formal words had passed and both were seated, it all at once struck the Maire, as he looked into the still beautiful and calm features of Madame Coulancourt, that what he had to say was by no means so easily said as he had imagined. However, it was necessary to make a beginning, so after a little pause of embarrassment on the part of Monsieur Gramont, he said—

"A very unpleasant duty, madame, has fallen to my lot to execute."

"Then, monsieur," said Madame, "the sooner an unpleasant duty is brought to a close the better; therefore pray do not hesitate, for suspense is oftentimes more trying than the reality."

"True, madame, so it is," returned Bertram Gramont; "I perfectly agree with you. You came, madame, to this château with a Mademoiselle de Tourville; her brother had been residing here before your arrival; indeed, I met that gentleman myself. It has reached the ears of Monsieur Fouché, the Minister of Police, that this Mademoiselle de Tourville is your own daughter, and that the person who represented her brother is an English naval officer."

Monsieur le Maire looked up into madame's countenance, but though pale, there was no alteration in its expression.

"Well, Monsieur Gramont," said Madame Coulancourt, "what is the consequence of this discovery of yours or Monsieur Fouché's?"

"It was my discovery, madame" said Monsieur Gramont, a

little roused; "it was my bounden duty to have made it. However, as you request to know what may be the consequences, I must inform you that I have received an official order to arrest you and your daughter, and to send you both under escort to Paris, to answer to the charge of harbouring the enemies of the Republic in your château, knowing them to be such. These, madame, are my instructions," taking, as he spoke, from his pocket-book a parchment, with a portentous looking seal on it, and the signature of Fouché, the future Duke of Oranto, affixed to it.

"I do not mean to doubt or dispute your instructions, Monsieur Gramont," replied Madame Coulancourt, with but a slight agitation of manner, "and will reserve anything I may have to say till confronted with my accusers."

Rather disappointed in the degree of emotion betrayed by Mabel's mother, Bertram Gramont resolved to inflict a further blow on his intended victim.

"Besides this charge against you, Madame Coulancourt, which seems greatly increased by the events of last night, which will exasperate the Government beyond measure, I find that a young man calling himself Louis Lebeau has been secreted in this chateau for several days—is not this the case, madame?"

"I deny nothing, monsieur," said Madame Coulancourt, calmly and coldly. "Pray let me know the extent of the accusations against me, and what it is your pleasure to do."

"Madame, you mistake my motives altogether," returned the gentleman, with a flushed cheek, for he was getting heated, seeing the coolness of Madame Coulancourt. "It is not my pleasure to injure or disturb you or your family—if possible, to avoid it. I wish to show you your situation, and then propose a remedy. Therefore, with respect to the pretended Louis Lebeau, I am aware that he is your son, Julian Arden."

Madame Coulancourt, at these words, felt a pang shoot through her heart. She had no idea that any one could have betrayed that secret.

Monsieur Gramont exulted; he plainly perceived he had now laid his hand on a chord that vibrated to the touch. He perceived she felt no fear for herself and Mabel, but she dreaded, and with reason, her son's falling into the power of Fouché.

"Your son, madame, left the château yesterday evening with a boy named Joseph. Before this time he is safely arrested, and it remains with me to consign him to a prison, perhaps for years. He, you know, is an Englishman by birth, and I am aware and have proof of his interviews with Lieutenant Thornton, who is one of the most determined officers in the navy of England, and the same who, with Sir Sidney Smith,

attempted to cut out the famous privateer, Vengeance, and again last night did actually carry her and an armed brig off, in which act your son was to have been an accomplice."

This was in truth a severe trial for Madame Coulaucourt : of all things she had dreaded her son's recognition, and his falling into the hands of her enemies. From his having served, though against his will, in the French naval service, and his desertion from it, which was quite natural, his sentence, if it depended on the Government, might be death.

Madame Coulaucourt very plainly perceived that all the movements in the château were betrayed ; that there was a concealed enemy amongst them, or a bribed spy.

Seeing, by madame's pale, expressive features, that his last untrue assertion had greatly alarmed her, inwardly exulting, Gramont observed, with apparent calmness and kindness of tone—

" You see, madame, the position in which I stand as maire of this arrondissement. It is my bounden duty to preserve the district from the insidious and piratical designs of the English who infest our coast; destroying our ships even in our harbours; and the very men who commit these acts have been protected in this very château more than a month. What would be said of my conduct and vigilance if these facts were brought against me? On one condition I can release your son, allow his escape to England, and destroy the accusations against yourself; and, if you desire it, aid and ensure your own escape to England with your son."

" And what, Monsieur Gramont," said Madame Coulaucourt, eagerly, her heart beating with anxiety for her children, " what do you require of me for such services?"

" Plainly, then, madame, the hand of your daughter, Mabel Arden."

The astonished mother started from her chair with an agonised look; her lips pale with the agitation she experienced.

Before she could utter a word the door of the adjoining room opened, and Mabel Arden entered the saloon; her beautiful features calm and self-possessed, with her fine and graceful figure erect, she passed before the startled Monsieur Gramont, who instantly rose from his chair, making a confused salutation at the same time. The mother also looked at her daughter, for she was not aware that Mabel had been in the library.

" Monsieur Gramont," said Mabel, looking him steadily and unflinchingly in the face, " I have heard every word of the artful and cowardly insinuations and threats with which you have assailed my beloved mother, creating a feeling of agony for the safety of her children, for the purpose of gaining your own ends."

"Mademoiselle," interrupted Bertram Gramont, his face flushed with suppressed rage, and excited by the look of scorn and detestation that Mabel made no effort to conceal, "you are severe and unjust. Admiration of your beauty——"

"Monsieur," hastily interrupted Mabel, "let us end this scene, and take your answer from me. To save my mother or my brother's life I would sacrifice my own at any time. But none of their lives are at all endangered, and your assertion of my brother's arrest is false. But supposing all that you have said to be true, in answer to your proposal of uniting your destiny to mine, I now tell you, that sooner than do so I would cheerfully submit to lay my head beneath the axe."

There were tears in the mother's eyes as Mabel turned to her and threw her arms round her neck, and said—

"Dear mother, do not give way to fear or agitation; the same Providence that has hitherto protected and shielded us will not now desert us. We have braved greater dangers than this. The monsters that disgraced this ill-starred land no longer exist; we shall have justice, and whatever our doom may be, we shall still be together."

"Very well, mademoiselle," said Bertram Gramont, giving way to his passion, "so you despise and scorn me. I will now prove to you that your words are nought, and that you may yet sue for that which you have despised."

He was turning to the door, when it opened and Monsieur Plessis entered the room. He and his wife had a few minutes before returned from Havre.

Monsieur Gramont paused, and so did Jean Plessis.

After civilly saluting the maire, he said—

"How is it that I see Madame Coulaucourt weeping? has anything occurred to distress you, madame?"

"Monsieur Plessis," said Bertram Gramont, "you appear to me to be blessed, not only with immense assurance, but also to have a happy knack of keeping your head upon your shoulders. Now, it appears to me this time you have placed it in jeopardy."

"Pardon, Monsieur le Maire," interrupted Jean Plessis with a smile, "you must be joking. For years I never felt my head so safe as at this moment. I wished much to see you to speak on the subject of the attempt made to rob me on my journey here."

Monsieur Gramont visibly started, and at once fiercely said—

"What do you mean, sir? what have I to do with that affair? It was investigated, as far as it was in my power, at the time."

"True, monsieur," returned Jean Plessis, calmly, "but I

have this day learned that one of the robbers is actually in your château, lying wounded; his eye being knocked out by a splinter of rock, in the affair on Lyon Point."

Bertram Gramont grew livid with rage.

"Where did you pick up that infamous lie? You forget, Jean Plessis, to whom you are talking. Where, I say, did you hear this falsehood?"

"This is no place, monsieur, neither must Madame Coulaucourt be incommoded by our controversy on this subject; I will attend you in another chamber."

"Let it be understood, Monsieur Plessis," returned the Maire, making an effort to regain his composure, "that Madame Coulaucourt and her daughter are under arrest, and from this moment I forbid all communication with any person from without. Sergeant Perrin and his men must be answerable to me for their safe guardianship, as they shall be escorted to Paris to-morrow."

"By whose orders, Monsieur Gramont," inquired Jean Plessis, "is this harsh measure put in force?"

"I do not see that I am bound to enlighten you, Monsieur Plessis," said the Maire, with a sneer. "However, you will, I suppose, acknowledge this authority," and he opened his pocket-book, and displayed the order of arrest, signed by Fouché.

Jean Plessis looked at the already much dreaded signature of Fouché very calmly.

"Ah!" said he, "I see, this is dated the 16th of June."

"Well," said Bertram Gramont, impatiently; "what has that to do with the validity of the document?"

"Nothing whatever, monsieur," returned Jean Plessis; "if it had been executed after the twenty-first. But," taking a very large memorandum book from his pocket, opening it, and selecting a document very similar to the one held by Monsieur Gramont, "here is an order, signed not only by Monsieur Fouché, but by the most powerful and influential of the directors of France—Monsieur Barras; it is as recent as the twenty-second, and if you will cast your eye over it you will perceive it cancels all previous documents, and especially directs the various authorities here, and on the road to Paris, to show particular attention to Madame Coulaucourt and her daughter, Mademoiselle Arden."

Bertram Gramont fell back perfectly annihilated, whilst Mabel, kissing her mother's cheek, exclaimed—

"Did I not say, dear mother, that a beneficent Providence would yet shield us from the evil designs of our enemies!"

Bertram Gramont bit his lip, and with a look of rage and vexation at Mabel, turned and left the room, saying to Jean Plessis—

"I have not done with you yet, monsieur; follow me into another apartment."

"This way, then, Monsieur le Maire," said the intendant, passing along the corridor, and throwing open the door of the small saloon into which our hero was first shown when he entered the Château Coulancourt.

"I see through your designs, Monsieur Plessis," cried Bertram Gramont, slamming the door after him as they entered the room; "you think you can elude justice, and purchase permission to become a traitor."

"Take care, Bertram Gramont," said Jean Plessis sternly, "how you accuse Monsieur Barras of such a crime."

"Who dares say I accused Monsieur Barras?" hastily interrupted the maire, turning pale, for in his passion he had allowed his thoughts utterance, and he well knew what a terrible power the said Monsieur Barras wielded. "I did not speak of any one in particular; I knew you to have harboured enemies to your country. You cannot deny but that you knew that an English officer and one of his men were in this house, under the assumed names of De Tourville and Bompert, and also that Madame de Coulancourt had her son concealed here. Do not think that even Monsieur Barras' power can shield culprits, against whom such charges can be fully proven."

"It will be time enough, Monsieur Gramont," returned Jean Plessis, recovering his usual calmness, "to argue this point when Madame Coulancourt arrives in Paris; she will not shrink from investigation. At the same time, others will have to answer grave charges. Antoine Dubois" (the maire started) "declares that the man now lying wounded in your house was one of the party who, in the disguise of Chouans, attempted to rob me of important papers, and that his name is Vadier—Augustine Vadier, once a galley slave, afterwards one of the monster Robespierre's diables."

"Where is that villain? Dubois," furiously interrupted Bertram Gramont; "he shall pay dearly for his lies. It was only this morning that I turned the wretch from my house for insolence and drunkenness."

"He says, monsieur," returned Jean Plessis, "that he was turned away because he demanded five hundred francs of this robber, Vadier, for inducing a girl in this house, called Dedan, to be a spy upon her mistress and all in the house."

Bertram Gramont was completely taken aback; he stamped with rage, only repeating—

"I demand, as maire of this district, to know where is this cursed liar and villain?"

"He is not far from Havre at this moment, monsieur," said Jean Plessis. "I met him on the road, and he confessed

the whole to me, and that Dedan was his accomplice. When I returned and taxed the girl, she burst into tears, and did not deny it. She, too, has left the house."

"I will not leave an inch of skin on that lying villain's back," said the maire, turning towards the door. "There is no use, Jean Plessis, in our bandying words; we know each other, we shall meet in Paris; and depend upon it, you have not triumphed over me, or accomplished your project yet. I shall not, of course, dispute Monsieur Barras' and Monsieur Fouché's right to grant Madame Coulangcourt and her daughter, and yourself and family, safe conduct to Paris; but your passport does not extend to her son, Julian Arden! Ah! you start. the game is equal still, we shall see who wins;" and passing into the lower hall, he remained some minutes conversing with Sergeant Perrin; then mounting his horse, rode at a sharp pace from the château.

Ten minutes afterwards, Sergeant Perrin and his men also left the château.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MADAME COULANCOURT and Mabel beheld Monsieur Gramont ride down the avenue from the château with feelings difficult to describe.

"That horrid man," said Mabel, "thought to terrify you, dear mother, into some compromise or promise, by acting on your feelings with respect to my brother's safety. He stated a falsity when he said Julian was arrested. It's impossible he could know anything about him; for Joseph assured us that he had crossed to the opposite side of the river before he left to return with the ponies."

"I forgot that, dear girl; I was so startled by his saying he had discovered Louis Lebeau to be Julian. There must be some traitor or spy in the château; who can it be?"

"It must be Dedan, the girl from Dame Moret's farm. Julia told me she had a lover to whom she was shortly to be married—a domestic in the house of Monsieur Gramont. She appears a kind, good-humoured girl. Oh! here is Julia."

"Thanks to the Virgin," said Julia, "they are gone, gendarmes and all; and only to think of it! it's that girl Dedan who has done all the mischief. Here is my father, he will explain all."

Monsieur Plessis and his wife entered the room; the latter looked pale and frightened.

"You look alarmed, Marie," said Madame Coulangcourt to

her intendant's good lady, and taking her hand they sat down on a sofa. "What makes you look so serious, now that we have, as dear Julian would say, weathered the storm?"

"I was so shocked," returned Madame Plessis, "by the discovery of the treachery of that girl, who might have destroyed us all by her weak infatuation."

"How did you discover her treachery, Jean Plessis?" said Madame. "For you cleverly turned the tables upon that designing man, Monsieur Gramont."

"I had not the slightest idea," said Jean Plessis, "when I left the château this morning that we had an enemy in the camp. We got to Havre to breakfast; I left Marie to make some purchases, and went to my appointment with Captain Bonafoux, the owner of the *chasse-mare*, and finally we arranged our terms and mode of proceeding; wishing to be back early, for fear Monsieur Gramont should visit the château. As I drove into the yard, the man, Antoine Dubois, was coming out of an out-house. When he saw me, he hesitated, and thought to get out by a back way; but as I had given the girl Dedan strict injunctions not to receive her intended husband at the château, I followed the man, and he paused till I came up.

"What brought you here this morning, Dubois?" I demanded. I knew the man well, for he is a native of this place, and never bore a very good character. He looked at me a moment and then said—"If you will give me a hundred francs, Monsieur Plessis, and promise not to detain me or the girl Dedan, I will tell you news that may save you all from the clutches of Monsieur Gramont, who drove me out of his house two hours ago, and will be here, I expect, every moment." I was struck with the man's manner, and aware how critical our situation is, I said, "I promise you; and if you really give me any intelligence that I consider of consequence, I will give you two hundred francs, and you and this girl Dedan, whom I suspect, shall be free to go where you like."

"Well, then," said Dubois, "the two hundred francs are mine. The man that led the pretended robbers to plunder you the day you arrived here with the young demoiselles, is now lying wounded in Monsieur Gramont's mansion; it was he who induced the coast-guard to endeavour to secure the two Englishmen you had hid in this château. He did so whilst Monsieur Gramont was gone to Paris; he wished to catch you all trying to escape, and then arrest you."

"Do you know the wounded man's name?" I demanded.

"Yes," he replied. "It is Vadier; he is a desperate jacobin. He told me I should have five hundred francs if I could get the girl Dedan to tell everything that passed in the château, and all

she heard; and though the girl was not willing, I at last induced her to do so.'

"I was struck at once by the name of Vadier. This, then, is the very Vadier, the galley slave, who stole the casket under the charge of the English midshipman.

"What did Monsieur Gramont go to Paris for?' I questioned.

"To procure an order from Monsieur Fouché to arrest you all, and send you to Paris.'

"Then Monsieur Gramont was aware that this Vadier intended to plunder me as I travelled the road?'

"Certainly he was. It was planned between them; they wanted some papers you had.'

"Come,' said I, 'this intelligence is worth the two hundred francs; but, Antoine Dubois, you are a great rascal.'

"There are many more in the world,' said the fellow, quite coolly; 'that Vadier is one, and my late master another. They treated me scurvily, and so let them take the consequence.'

"If he catches you after this disclosure, he will make you pay for it.'

"Ah, ça! He must catch me first. Have I earned the money?'

"Yes,' said I; 'whether it will do you good or not I cannot say. There it is,' and I gave it him. 'Now, where are you going?'

"If you intend stating what I have told you to Monsieur Gramont,' said Dubois, 'you may say I am gone to Havre. I only require an hour's start. You will let the girl Dedan go?'

"Yes. She is a bad girl; but you made her so. She shall be dismissed.'

"Well,' said the man, doggedly; 'may be so; but we are not so bad as those who tempted us. I detested the wretch Vadier, and I hope he will die of his wound; I wanted to quit service and to marry Dedan, and the five hundred francs tempted me.'

"Do you think, Monsieur Plessis," asked Mabel, "that they will be caught by Monsieur Gramont? "

"I rather think," said Jean Plessis, "that he would prefer their escaping. I do not imagine he will look for them. What surprises me is, that he ventured to drive out of his employ a man who knew so much."

"I suspect," observed Julia, "that he acquired his knowledge of what he told you, father, from practising the same espionage upon his employers that he was paid or promised to be paid for spying upon us."

"Very like y," returned the intendant; "however, his in-

telligence was of immense importance to me. It completely gave me the upper hand of Monsieur Gramont."

"How do you intend to proceed?" said Madame Coulandcourt. "I feel so very anxious about Julian."

"He has done wisely in crossing to the other side of the river," said Jean Plessis. "He did not go further than the village of —, two leagues from here. We must, however, lose no more time, but act with all expedition. We have a shrewd enemy, and I believe if I had not known about this Augustine Vadier, he would have done much more than he will attempt now. To-morrow I will send down your luggage and travelling carriage to be embarked on board the *chasse-mare*; it will be a complete blind. It is nearly eighteen leagues to Rouen, and it will create no surprise your going there by water. Most travellers from Havre prefer it, for the sake of the scenery; and at present, owing to the recent disturbances, the roads are really dangerous. The day after to-morrow, therefore, madame, can you be ready?"

"As to that, we could be ready to-morrow evening," said Mabel, "but with respect to Julian, how are we to manage?"

"There will be no difficulty. When off the coast we will take him on board. I shall send one of the crew of the boat to the village to stay and watch for us, and let Monsieur Julian know; the man will seek him, of course, under the name of Lebeau."

"God grant," said Madame Coulandcourt, "that no untoward event may occur to mar your apparently well-laid plans!"

In the meantime Monsieur Gramont rode rapidly towards his own mansion, bitterly cursing the sagacity and foresight of Jean Plessis. He guessed at once how he had contrived to procure the protection of Barras and Fouché, both men playing into each other's hands.

"He must," muttered Bertram Gramont, "have sacrificed an immense sum to Barras, whose boundless extravagance is universally known."

Jean Nicholas Barras began life as a sub-lieutenant in the regiment of Languedoc, served a short time in India, became a determined revolutionist, and was one of those who voted for the death of the unfortunate Louis the Sixteenth. His power and arbitrary will are well known, and he exercised them to enrich himself, caring little, so he kept up his boundless extravagance and gratified his inordinate vanity, whether he served the Republic or not. He kept his place till Bonaparte dispersed the existing government. Jean Plessis had in truth sacrificed a very large sum to Barras, besides the twenty thousand francs. He had also confessed that Madame Coulandcourt's daughter had arrived from England to remain with her mother.

"Showed she was a dutiful child," said the director, "a couple of women cannot overturn the Republic. We do not war with the fair sex. Let them come up to Paris, and they shall have every protection. Monsieur Gramont has found a mare's nest; that Englishman he spoke of, domiciled at Coulancourt, I dare say is a lover of Mademoiselle Arden. Fool enough to run the chance of a few years' captivity for a smile from his ladye love, n'est ce pas?"

Monsieur Plessis assented, but gave no further explanation; and having obtained the passport expressly revoking the order of arrest given six or seven days previously by Fouché to Monsieur Gramont, he returned to Coulancourt, thus completely baffling Monsieur le Maire.

Bertram Gramont, on reaching his château, proceeded to the chamber of Augustine Vadier. That worthy had contrived to get up and dress himself, and was reclining back in a chair, with a bandage across his head, concealing the contusion and loss of his eye.

"Here's a cursed botched piece of business from beginning to end!" said Bertram Gramont passionately, pacing the chamber backwards and forwards.

"Why, what has occurred now?" asked Vadier, anxiously. "I think I may say I am a sufferer."

"Your own doings," returned his accomplice, almost savagely; "you precipitated events. That cursed Jean Plessis has outwitted me; he has paid an immense sum to Barras and Fouché, and has come back from Paris with a most stringent passport. There is no disputing the purport, for it actually ensures the safety of mother and daughter to Paris, and they leave this to-morrow or the next day."

"Diable!" muttered Vadier; "how do they go?"

"In a chasse-mare, I understand, to Rouen, or as far as they can by water."

"And do you believe they will go to Paris?" said Vadier, looking with his remaining sinister optic into the flushed features of Bertram Gramont.

"And where else would you have them go?" returned the maire, pausing in his walk.

"Why, escape to England, after that cursed lieutenant in the English navy. They intended to go before he made his escape on board the corvette. Where's the son, Julian?"

Bertram Gramont looked at his accomplice with a startled expression.

"By St. Nicholas! your idea is not a bad one, it's possible. But do you know that Jean Plessis has discovered you are here, and also that it was you who stopped and attempted to rob him a month ago?"

"Tonnerre de diable! how is that?" exclaimed Augustine Vadier, starting up, his one orb flashing with excitement. "Who betrayed me?"

"It's deuced little consequence," said Gramont, "because Plessis is not likely to make any advantage of his discovery. He used it against me, though, for he insinuated that I was your accomplice."

"But who betrayed my retreat?" again demanded Augustine Vadier. "If the government knew I was here, or anywhere in France, they would have my head."

"It's only three parts of a head now," replied his companion, with one of his sneering laughs. "But make yourself easy, they do not want heads; they would be content to send you to Cayenne; it's a hot place, but——"

"Take care, Bertram Gramont," interrupted the *ci-devant* galley slave, "that you do not carry your cursed propensity for joking too far; if I make a journey to Cayenne, it's not unlikely but that you would keep me company."

Bertram Gramont laughed outright.

"Diable! you are sensitive, *mon ami*. If I should have to keep you company we should still row in the same boat; come, come, be sensible."

Augustine Vadier swallowed his ire, and again demanded how Jean Plessis had obtained his information about him.

"Through our own folly," said Gramont. "I thought myself so secure in my projects, that it slipped my memory how unwise it was to turn that rascal Antoine Dubois out of my service, drunken and impudent as he was."

"Antoine Dubois!" repeated Vadier, with intense surprise; "how did that villain find out my real name?"

"*Ma foi!* being employed as a spy taught him, no doubt, the trick of practising the trade at home. The rascal must have been acting the spy upon us, and, no doubt, picked up his information by listening, and, maybe, overhauling some of your papers."

"Curse him! you open my eyes," said Vadier, bitterly.

"But no matter, let us consult what is to be done. Your matrimonial scheme did not answer, your finances are at the lowest ebb, and this day month if you do not pay one hundred and twenty-three thousand francs to Monsieur Marie-Claude-Sanglois, you must surrender this estate and *château* to be sold."

"Well, I know that," carelessly returned Bertram Gramont; "I want something fresh from you. Could you not forge me an order, signed by Madame Coulancourt, for one hundred thousand francs upon her banker?"

"No," returned Vadier; "the failure in securing those

papers Jean Plessis had in his possession throws us out. Her Paris banker has no such sum, depend on it; the bulk of her fortune is disposed of in some other way we have failed in finding out. Monsieur Barras, depend on it, has secured a goodly portion. No, you must still stick to convicting her of attempting flight from this country, the only way you can secure your ends."

"Diable ! she is going to Paris ; if Sergeant Perrin fails in entrapping her son at Caudebee, I shall lose all power over her."

"And are you so shallow as to suppose they will venture to Paris?" said Vadier, contemptuously. "When this affair of the Vengeance is known to the government it will make a stir, Barras will not be able to shield Madame Coulancourt, with all his power and love of gold ; her participation and knowledge of the two Englishmen residing under the same roof with her is too palpable, she would be condemned. Depend on it, the whole party meditate flight to England ; what is easier ? You say they embark at Havre for Rouen in a *chasse-mare*, the captain of which is a notorious smuggler. Do not you think, for a sum of money, that fellow would run them over and land them on the coast of England ?"

"By St. Nicholas ! you are right, and if so, all will go well. I'll catch them in the very act of flight, and then the game will be ours. You must get out of the way, for this Jean Plessis, when detected and caught, will bring his accusation against you."

"I am not afraid," replied Vadier, "it's money I want. I shall go to Paris, there is another convulsion preparing, the jacobins are in force in the capital."

"You will be a fool if you do," retorted Bertram Gramont ; "mark my word, Bonaparte will by and by upset all the Directors and their rules, annihilate the jacobin party, and establish a powerful military government. However, that's your look-out ; I shall go, to-morrow, to Havre, and make minute inquiries about the embarkation of madame, and then see Captain Gaudet and the owners of the Vengeance privateer, who are furious at her loss. I will have the *Ca-Ira* *chasse-mare* closely watched and followed, and if my suspicions are true, she shall be captured just as she clears the harbour. There will be no getting over that disaster, and perhaps Master Louis Lebeau may be a prisoner by that time. There is a very fine privateer, mounting fourteen guns, and one hundred and twenty-three men and officers in Havre, but this British cruiser outside is thought to be watching for her ; the privateer is waiting for thick weather to get out. If Captain Gaudet can induce her commander to watch the mouth of the Seine, it's impossible the *chasse-mare* can put to sea."

"I would go on board myself, if I was in your place," said Augustine Vadier. "Your triumph would be complete."

"By all the saints! so it would," said Bertram Gramont, exultingly; "it would repay me for the insult that rascal, Jean Plessis, inflicted on me this day. If your conjecture turns out right, and we catch them, nothing can save them from condemnation."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AFTER the departure of the *Onyx* corvette our hero remained in the *Vengeance*, lying to, very busy setting her completely in order.

The men were delighted with the privateer, the accommodation being so vastly superior to a vessel of war. The weather was remarkably beautiful, with smooth water and light breezes. As Lieutenant Thornton and his midshipman, Master Burdett, sat at dinner, the latter said—

"Would not you like, sir, to try the merits of this fine craft? I'm sure she would beat anything afloat."

"I dare say she would, Master Burdett; but, having a certain object in view, I must not get out of the direct line of the port of Havre. I intend standing in, towards evening. We are short-handed and lightly armed; and, though all the guns are below, we could not work more than we have on deck. Besides, I do not think, under present circumstances, I should be justified in seeking an action with an enemy; if forced into one it's another thing."

"Sail to the westward, sir," cried Bill Saunders, down the cabin skylight; "large ship, seemingly."

Lieutenant Thornton hastened upon deck, joyfully followed by Master Burdett, who rejoiced in the hope of either a chase, a fight, or even being chased. Midshipmen are insatiable, and very mercurial kind of animals. On gaining the deck Lieutenant Thornton took his glass and regarded the stranger; her top-gallant sails only could be seen, and they were braced sharp on a wind.

"That is a vessel of war, no doubt," he coolly observed, "and by the cut of her top-gallant sails I should say French, standing in for Havre. We may readily pass for a French privateer; but if the captain hears, when he gets into Havre, about the cutting out of the *Vengeance*, he will come out again and look for us, and drive us off the coast, which would defeat my project. Cast off the fore-sheet, and let us get an offing till the stranger gets into port, if he is so bound."

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Bill, who acted as chief mate, "blow me if it ain't a pity we bean't in ship-shape—more guns and more men—we would soon stop that ere chap."

The Vengeance was now under weigh, with her full complement of sail, for the first time since captured; and the men looked over the side with many a remark upon the smooth and rapid way she went through the water.

"She's a clipper, Master Burdett," said Lieutenant Thornton. "This is a light breeze, comparatively speaking; just take the small glass, and call one of the men aft, and see what we are making."

In a few minutes the log-line was overboard, Bill slacking the line and Master Burdett holding the glass.

"Stop," sang out Bill, and, looking at the marks, declared she was going nine knots. This was a surprising speed for the wind then blowing. "There be very few crafts, sir," continued Bill, "that could hold their own with this here Vengeance; she'd laugh at a frigate in a light breeze."

"She always did Bill, even before her spars and sails were increased. You will see in half an hour we shall sink the stranger's top-gallant sails."

Finding such to be the case, the Vengeance was again hove to, whilst the crew still watched the course of the stranger. Presently they could see her topsails, and then our hero decidedly declared her to be a French frigate. Their fore and main lug were then lowered, and under her mizen and jib she kept pretty much in the same place, and as the sun went down they lost sight of the French ship, which evidently stood in for the port of Havre, without noticing them.

Sail was then made, and they hauled in for the land. Lieutenant Thornton was in an extremely anxious state of mind; he was far from feeling sure that Jean Plessis would be able to carry out his plans. If he failed, it was terrible to think how many years might pass before he should be again blessed with the sight of his beloved Mabel. It was one consolation to him, however, to know that in the then state of France there was no fear of either cruel persecution or death. The government were anxious to wipe away that frightful stain that no time will ever obliterate from the pages of French history.

Still, their youth might pass away, and their day-dreams of love and felicity fade, like almost everything else in this transitory and shifting globe. But young hope struggled in his breast, though some writer, we forget his name, declares, "We believe at once in evil, and never believe in good; but upon reflection this is sad. But we live in hope, and we never cease to indulge in hope to the last."

As they stretched in with the land to the westward of Havre, about the middle of the first watch, the man on the lookout sung out—

“Sail ahead on the starboard bow!”

Lieutenant Thornton, who was pacing the deck chatting to the young midshipman, went forward, and looking over the starboard bulwarks, perceived two vessels standing towards them; they were about a league off. One was a schooner, the other a large chasse-mare.

They were making for Havre, and must have seen the Vengeance; but, as our hero imagined, mistook her for a French vessel, for no British cruisers or privateers were lugger rigged. The chasse-mare was nearly as large in tonnage as the Vengeance, though not near so long. In ten minutes, as they were then steering, they would be alongside each other.

“I’m blessed if that schooner ain’t an English one,” said Bill Saunders to a messmate, as they stood regarding the two vessels.

Lieutenant Thornton thought so too, and he also thought the chasse-mare was a privateer. It was a clear, fine night, with a light wind at east and by south. To let the two vessels run into Havre would betray the Vengeance being on the coast, so he made up his mind to run the chasse-mare on board and take her, if possible, by surprise. When the crew of the Vengeance were apprised of his intention, they joyfully ran to arm and prepare for the struggle, not bestowing a thought upon the disparity of force in men. As the chasse-mare came on, followed at half a mile distance by the schooner, they could see at all events that there were double their own number on board.

Lieutenant Thornton prepared to hail, desiring young Burdett to stand by the man at the helm, adding, “When I give the signal, run her on board.” Standing in the bows of the Vengeance, our hero with a speaking trumpet hailed the Frenchman, who as well as the lugger had no colours flying. Demanding the name of the vessel, a man in the bows replied—

“The Belle Poule, of Havre, Captain François Bouvet, with a prize. Are you the Vengeance, Captain Pierre Gaudet?”

Lieutenant Thornton waved his hat. The next moment the helm was put down, and the lugger, shooting up rapidly in the wind’s eye, came right across the quarter of the Belle Poule, and dropped alongside. A cheer that utterly astounded the French crew pealed over the deep, and as the two vessels became locked together by grappling irons thrown from the Vengeance into the Belle Poule, Lieutenant Thornton, followed

by his entire crew, leaped on board the enemy, cutlass and pistol in hand. Taken completely by surprise, and quite unprepared, the crew of the Belle Poule, after a few ill-aimed shots at the boarders, threw down their arms and ran below, excepting the captain and two of his officers; the former was disarmed, though in a furious passion, by Lieutenant Thornton. The lieutenant and first mate, seeing the captain disarmed, threw down their cutlasses and surrendered. Bill Saunders' first object was to fasten the French crew down below, for they amounted in number to forty-eight, without reckoning the captain, lieutenant, and mate. A violent scuffle below, however, attracted Bill's attention, and some words reaching his ear, he called Master Burdett, and then by inquiry discovered that there were fourteen English prisoners below. Lieutenant Thornton immediately ordered the men up, and as the French crew of the Belle Poule had no idea of the small number of their assailants, they obeyed the order, and, one by one, up came fourteen stout, able-bodied seamen, giving three hearty cheers as they gained the deck.

"The schooner has tacked, sir, and is standing off to sea," said Bill Saunders.

"Stand by, then, to separate the vessels," returned Lieutenant Thornton. "Now, my lads," he continued, turning to the released prisoners, "you must assist; we are, as you see, short-handed."

"Ay, ay, sir; with all our hearts," said a short, broad, hard-featured man, who said he was first mate of the schooner. "This was a devil of a surprise, sir, and a bold venture," he added as he looked at the few men belonging to the Vengeance, actively engaged separating the vessels.

"What is the name of your schooner, my man?" demanded Lieutenant Thornton.

"The Fox privateer, sir; eight guns and sixty men, from Poole—Captain George Goodall."

"How is that?" said our hero, surprised. "Did you strike to this craft?"

"No, sir," said the mate, "that we did not; we'd seed him to the devil first. We struck to the Virginie frigate after beating this here chap, and a small lugger that came up with us off Ushant; but the Virginie coming up, threatened to sink us if we did not strike, so in course we did. And so the captain of the frigate, who was watching the motions of our ships off Brest and Isle Dieu, took our captain and first lieutenant and nineteen of the men on board the Virginie, and then this here chap put us fourteen down below, and sent a prize crew into the schooner with orders to take us into Havre, where the frigate

was bound to. The schooner is a mortal fast boat, sir; if you don't look out you'll never catch her."

"Do not be alarmed about that, mate," replied our hero. "We shall have her before two hours are out. Now I must divide our prisoners, for I cannot spare more than half-a-dozen men to take charge of this craft. I will leave five or six of your own men to keep her in our wake, whilst I chase the schooner."

"Ay, ay, sir," returned the mate; "that we will do, and willingly lend a hand in any way you think fit."

Having divided the prisoners and separated the vessels, the Vengeance made all sail after the captured Fox. There was a fine smooth-water breeze, and the schooner, with every sail drawing, was making her way for the land, seeking to enter a deep bay, on whose western point Lieutenant Thornton knew there was a battery of four heavy guns. The Vengeance sailed under her enormous lugs and top-sails like a witch, and yet so evenly and smoothly, that she created but little foam under her bows. Fast as the schooner certainly sailed, the Vengeance went two feet for her one. The crew of the Fox were in admiration of her speed, for just as the schooner came within reach of the battery, the Vengeance was close up with her. Nevertheless, the prize crew in the Fox opened fire upon them from her six-pounders; but Lieutenant Thornton, who could have done her considerable damage long before, did not return her fire, not wishing to injure the schooner; therefore, he at once ran alongside, and his men, being prepared, with a loud cheer, leaped down upon her deck, cutlass in hand. There were six or seven-and-twenty fierce privateer's men on board the Fox, who received them with a volley from firearms; but our hero, followed closely by Bill Saunders, dashed in amongst the enraged enemy, driving them aft with a spirit and energy that staggered them. In the midst of the contest the English prisoners broke loose from below to the number of twenty, and with a loud cheer seized every available weapon, and attacked the enemy with a vigour and resolution that soon settled the affair. And the captain, having lost two of his crew and a dozen wounded, surrendered, just as the fort on the point opened fire; her first shot knocked the jib-boom of the schooner to atoms. By this time daylight dawned, and our hero at once ordered the two vessels to make sail from the shore. As the schooner hove round, a second shot knocked away her figure-head and part of her stern; but, a fresh wind blowing, she soon got out of range of the battery. Thornton had one or two slight cuts himself, and several of his men also; but none were seriously hurt. Our hero had a consultation with the mate of the Fox

privateer, who, marvellously elated at the recapture of the schooner, was perfectly willing to do whatever Lieutenant Thornton considered most expedient.

Our hero wished him to run the two vessels across Channel to Poole, from whence the Fox hailed, and surrender her to her owners, leaving the settlement of recapture to be arranged when he arrived in England. As to the prisoners, being more in number than the united crews, our hero had them all put into the boats of the Belle Poule, and, standing to the eastward of the battery, permitted them to pull for the shore—a proceeding that afterwards proved exceedingly injurious to our hero.

Making but short delay, the two crafts bore away across Channel, whilst the Vengeance worked back to the mouth of the Seine. During the day Lieutenant Thornton got up two more guns from the hold of the Vengeance, and mounted them, and repaired the damage done to the rigging and sails.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE fifth morning after the cutting out of the Vengeance, Madame Coulandcourt and her daughter, and Monsieur Plessis and his family, left the château in two carriages for Havre, to embark in the *Ca-Ira* chasse-mare, apparently destined for Rouen. The party reached Havre in time to take advantage of the first of the flood-tide; and though not without experiencing some degree of anxiety, they felt no positive fear, having seen no more of Monsieur Gramont, and having arranged everything with Dame Moret and her daughters, leaving them under the impression that they were actually going to Paris. Monsieur Plessis, though perfectly persuaded of their fidelity and trustworthiness, yet, for their own sakes, in case of any future investigation, he wished them to remain perfectly clear of any participation in their escape to England.

Havre de Grace, seen from the water, presents an imposing and handsome appearance. The breadth of the Seine is considerable; the citadel and arsenal, and the immense storehouses for the construction and arming of ships, give it the appearance of a formidable sea-port town, being entirely surrounded by walls and deep ditches. The harbour of Havre is subject to a curious phenomenon—the tide does not begin to ebb till three hours after the full tide.

Having embarked on board the chasse-mare, and all being ready, the warps were cast off, and the sails set, the vessel

glided out from the quay into the broad stream, with Havre on one side, and the town and spacious harbour of Honfleur on the other. There was an awning over the stern of the vessel, and the wind being fair, and the tide strong, the *Ca-Ira*, under her fore-sail and mizen, went rapidly up with the tide. Jean Plessis pointed out to Madame Coulaucourt, Mabel, and his daughter Julia, several privateers in the harbour, one a remarkably handsome lugger, the *Etoile*, which they passed close alongside.

"That," said Jean Plessis, "is a larger vessel than the *Vengeance*, though not reputed so fast or so fortunate as the other was before her capture. The *Etoile* has eighty men on board, and carries twelve guns of various calibre. I am told she is going to sea to-morrow evening with a frigate called the *Virginie*, lying in the outer harbour. This is fortunate, for if we run out to-night we shall be well out of sight—indeed, across the Channel—before they lift their anchors."

Little did Monsieur Plessis imagine that, as they shot past the *Etoile*, Bertram Gramont and Augustine Vadier were both, from the cabin windows, regarding all the motions of those on board the *Ca-Ira*. No sooner had the *chasse-mare*, with her party, proceeded a mile from the *Etoile*, than a fast rowing-boat, pulled by four oars, left the privateer, and with Augustine Vadier, his head bandaged, but his one eye keen and vengeful, seated in the stern-sheets, pulled quickly after the *Ca-Ira*, merely keeping her in sight.

Mabel felt her spirits rise as they receded from the view of Havre, shut out by the head of the noble river, on whose placid surface the *chasse-mare* glided with scarcely a perceptible motion.

"I feel," said our fair heroine to Julia, as they sat together under the awning, gazing at the beautiful scenery on both sides of the wide river, "I feel such a lightness of heart now that we have lost sight of Havre. Do you know, I detest the sight of walled towns, frowning forts, with stern sentinels pacing gloomily backwards and forwards, seemingly engaged in nothing, and still ready to pounce upon any unwary intruder. It appears as if the inhabitants of those towns were prisoners, and shut out from all intercourse with those without; then the tiresome examination of papers and passports, as if every soul going in or out was suspected of something, annoys me."

Julia smiled, saying, "Custom, *ma chere*; but have you no walls to your towns in England?"

"No, thank goodness! if I except the picturesque ivy-covered ruins of barbarous times, that you may yet get a glimpse of in some of our very old cities. In dear old England you may come and go into our cities and towns, and no one in-

quires whence you come or whither you go. The houses and cottages, gardens and fields, seem mingled together in happy liberty of situation, neither kept in by prescribed limits, or ruled by arbitrary restrictions."

"Well," observed Julia, with a half-sigh, "I love France, with all its faults—faults of its rulers. Providence has bestowed upon it a fine climate, and beautiful scenery, not inferior to any other country, in my poor opinion—only marred by the ambition and sad acts of its sons."

"I trust, dear Julia," returned Mabel, affectionately, "you do not too much regret the land we are about to leave."

"Oh, no, my sweet Mabel," interrupted Julia, "it is a consolation that I carry my heart with me." There was a slight increase of colour in her cheek as she said the words, for Mabel's expressive eyes were fixed upon hers; "fortunately I am heart-whole," she added, with a gay laugh; "for if I left a lover behind me it would be a sad thing."

Mabel made no reply; at that moment her thoughts were occupied. Madame Coulancourt was conversing with Madame Plessis, whilst Jean Plessis and the captain of the *Ca-Ira* were in close consultation. Having proceeded up the river as far as the village of Eure, the *chasse-mare* furled her sails and let go her anchor. It was nearly sunset, and a light-grey mist—a sign of a still, hot night—began to steal up from the water and creep lightly over the land. The row-boat, which had carefully followed them at a safe distance, saw the *chasse-mare* anchor, whilst yet there was flood-tide to run farther up, now pulled in shore, and Augustine Vadier and one of the crew took the road to the village, about five hundred yards from the western shore of the river.

Having reached within a short distance of the road that led up from the river to the village, they stationed themselves behind a hedge, observing every person that passed along that road.

Presently they perceived two young men, in sailor's attire, come out from a cabaret, and take their way towards the water.

"Ha!" said Augustine Vadier, "I should say that tall one is the Master Louis Lebeau we seek."

"Parbleu!" said the sailor, "he may be; but I know that the short one is Pierre Leveque, one of the crew of the *Ca-Ira*. I sailed with him several times in her, and many a jolly cargo we landed under the cliffs of Dover."

"Then, we are both right," said Vadier, "and it's a very clear case, too, that they will drop down with the night's tide and get to sea, if we don't prevent them."

"As for that, you may do as you please," returned the sailor,

"you may arrest those that are passengers in the *Ca-Ira*, but, morbleu ! you're not going, surely, to have up her captain and crew for making a good bargain for the use of their craft. I, for one, won't turn against an old comrade."

"Diable ! what do we want with the *Ca-Ira* ?" said Augustine Vadier, "or her crew ? they will not be touched. We only intend arresting her passengers, for that Louis Lebeau you see with Pierre Leveque is comrade to the Englishman who cut out the *Vengeance*."

"Sacre diable ! is that the case ?" said the privateer's man ; "I would rather have a shot at those blustering Englishmen than a quarter's pay."

He was right in his conjecture.

"Ah !" said Vadier, as he and his comrade crept along the hedge, and watched the movements of the two young men, "a boat is pulling to shore from the *chasse-mare*, you will see they will go on board." For the two men in sailors' attire were Louis Lebeau and Pierre Eveque.

"We may now pull back to the *Etoile*," remarked Vadier, "I am satisfied ; the fog is getting thick on the river, and we shall have to keep a sharp look-out that the vessel does not pass us in the mist."

It was dusk by the time the boat got back to the *Etoile*. Augustine Vadier, getting on board, proceeded to the cabin, where he found Bertram Gramont, the captain of the *Etoile*, Guillaume, Yves Obet, and Captain Pierre Gaudet, late of the *Vengeance*. Augustine Vadier went by a false name. None of the party in the cabin knew him only as a friend of Monsieur Gramont.

"Well," said Bertram Gramont, "where did they anchor ?"

"Oh, just where we suspected," said Augustine Vadier, "off the village of Eure, and then we saw this pretended Louis Lebeau and one Pierre Eveque, one of the crew of the *Ca-Ira*, who has been away from his vessel these last three or four days, go on board the *chasse-mare* in their boat."

"Just as I expected," said Bertram Gramont.

"It is a well laid and well-planned scheme," observed the skipper of the *Etoile* ; "they will drop down no doubt with the ebb, and then join the *Vengeance* outside."

"What !" exclaimed Vadier, savagely, and fixing his one eye on the speaker, "is the lugger, the *Vengeance* off the coast ?"

"Yes, *sacre voleur* ! it is there, sure enough ; but we'll have her again from these accursed Anglais. We intend to get under weigh presently, and wait for the coming in sight of the *Ca-Ira*, which is a very fast boat, and can easily beat the *Etoile* ;

but as we pass the *Vengeance*, now lying at anchor, the *Etoile* will at once put to sea and effectually cut off the *Vengeance*, and this *Ca-Ira* also."

"But how the diable did you not discover that your lugger was outside?" said Augustine Vadier; "I understood that she sailed with the brig for England."

"Ay, ay! so it was thought," said Gaudet; "but the night before last this infernal Lieutenant Thornton, who cut out the lugger with the boats of the *Onyx* corvette, ran on board the privateer *Belle Poule* and took her by surprise, as well as her prize, the *Fox* schooner, and this under the nose of the battery of Grantell Point."

"Parbleu! he's a brave officer, at all events," said the skipper of the *Etoile*, "but I think he has now run out his log."

"When did you hear all this cursed intelligence?" remarked Vadier to Monsieur Gramont.

"Half an hour after you left, a boat crossed over from Harfleur, with two of the crew of the *Belle Poule*, who were landed below the battery of Grantill; they brought the news, and their captain, Orbet, sent his boat with the intelligence to the frigate *Virginie*, which was luckily lying at single anchor in the roads. The commander of the *Virginie* is extremely anxious to recapture the *Vengeance*; so you see our plans are well laid. This lugger has become remarkably notorious. In fact there is quite a fever amongst the officers and men belonging to the privateers to regain possession of the *Vengeance*."

Shortly after this conversation the *Etoile* was got under weigh. The light mist still lay upon the surface of the water, but the land wind was rising, which would most likely disperse it.

As the *Etoile* came up with the *Virginie* they perceived that the frigate was already getting under weigh, and one of the officers hailed the lugger, desiring the skipper to heave to at the entrance, rather to the westward, as they were going to take advantage of the fog, and run well out.

Two hours after this there was not a breath of wind, and the mist lay thicker than ever upon the surface of the deep. Those on board the *Etoile* were in a state of great anxiety, for they were merely drifting with the tide, and could not see twenty yards from them.

"Morbleu! this is a contretemps," said Guillaume Orbet to Captain Gaudet, who were pacing the deck, trying anxiously to distinguish objects through the mist; "that *Ca-Ira* may slip through our fingers if this fog continues."

"No, there is no fear of that," returned Captain Gaudet;

"the frigate must have gained a good offing whilst the breeze lasted, so that when the fog lifts, with the rising of the sun, we shall not be far off our chase, depend on it; for the *Ca-Ira*, coming down the river, must also have been becalmed like ourselves, whereas the frigate stood out with the breeze."

At sunset, as was his usual custom, Lieutenant Thornton stood close in for the harbour's mouth; but, the wind getting very light, and a mist setting in over the line of coast, the *Vengeance* was hove to about a league from the entrance into the harbour, and a strict and careful watch kept. Our hero was beginning to get uneasy. Five days had passed, and no craft had left the port of Havre steering a direct course out to sea. He was sure of this, for the weather had been beautifully fine, and the nights clear, and the watch kept incessant and vigilant. There was no sign either of the *Onyx* corvette.

About midnight, finding it still perfectly calm, and the mist thick, he retired for a few hours' sleep, so that he might be on deck with the break of day, when he expected the fog to lift with a land breeze.

Between three and four o'clock in the morning he jumped up, and, dressing, repaired upon deck. As he expected, with the rising of the sun the fog began to lift from the sea, and the breeze off the coast came fresh and pleasant after the heat of the previous night. Suddenly the haze dispersed like magic, as if it had never existed, and the full rays of a dazzling July sun fell upon the sea around them, the water sparkling and rippling under the influences of that most pleasant of breezes—a land wind—especially if in the Mediterranean, where it comes off laden with the perfume of the orange and citron, and the hundred other odoriferous plants that flourish beneath the southern skies of Italy. The sight that met the anxious gaze of Lieutenant Thornton brought all the blood into his cheeks and temples with excitement.

The *Vengeance* was about four miles off the Port of Havre, the breeze blowing steadily out. Coming before the wind was a large *chasse-mare*, under all the sail she could carry, and from her foretopmast waved a large red ensign; she was scarcely two miles from the *Vengeance*. Stretching across from the western side of the Seine's mouth was the *Etoile* privateer, also under a cloud of canvas. She was scarcely a mile from the *Ca-Ira*, and it appeared to be her evident intention to cross her course.

As yet, so absorbed were those on board the *Vengeance* regarding the *chasse-mare*, which carried the signal at the mast-head, so long wished for, that no one thought of looking seaward till their attention was attracted by the boom of a heavy gun in that direction. Turning round, with a startled

look, Lieutenant Thornton beheld a frigate about three miles to leeward, covered from her trucks to her deck with a snow-white cloud of canvas. There was no mistaking her, it was the French frigate of thirty-two guns, the *Virginie*.

"By heavens!" exclaimed Lieutenant Thornton, after a glance with his glass, "that is the same frigate we saw five days ago run into Havre."

"There is another lofty-rigged ship away in south-west, sir," called out Midshipman Burdett from the top-gallant cross-trees, "I can make out her royal and top-gallant sails."

"Ha! by Jove!" said our hero, "if this should be the *Onyx*; and yet she would be no match whatever for this frigate. The situation is perilous," continued our hero to Bill Saunders, who came to his side, knowing full well how deeply anxious his master must be, seeing the object he so ardently longed to behold coming towards him.

"We must cross between that lugger and the *chasse-mare*, Bill. Get your men to the guns; I will take the helm and pass as close to her as I can. We will prevent this privateer lugger closing with her; and if the *chasse-mare* with the red flag hauls her wind she may stand along shore, having the advantage of the breeze, and thus escape, for the frigate will not look to her."

"Ay, ay, sir. As soon as that fellow comes in range of our long eighteen-pounder shall I give him a dose of round shot, and mayhap cripple him?"

"Yes, cripple him, by all means, Bill; bring down some of his spars, and we may get out of this scrape yet. Now, Master Burdett, look to the men and see they do not want for ammunition, for the lugger approaching us is a formidable opponent in men and metal."

Whilst speaking, Lieutenant Thornton kept his eye fixed upon the movements of the frigate. She was close hauled, and standing with her head to the eastward. She would thus intercept any attempt of the *Ca-Ira* to gain the open sea. But his attention was more imperatively called to the *Etoile* privateer, on which, coming within range of his carronade, Bill Saunders opened fire, and with such exceeding good aim that at the second discharge he brought down the main-lug, knocking the yard to splinters. This gave our hero an opportunity of tacking, and though the *Etoile* fired a broadside at him with her eight-pounders, she merely cut some tacks and sheets, which were immediately replaced.

The *Vengeance*, on the starboard tack, could now run close under the stern of the *chasse-mare*, which had already hauled her wind, keeping along shore to the eastward. Our hero could see by the white dresses, on which the sun shone, that there

were several females on the deck of the vessel; and his heart told him that Mabel was surely amongst them. In ten minutes he was nearly within hail, and with his glass could distinguish Mabel, Madame Coulancourt, and Julia, gazing towards the *Vengeance*. The *Etoile* had rapidly repaired her disaster, and was again steering towards them.

Lieutenant Thornton stood ready to hail the *Ca-Ira*, as the *Vengeance* came tearing through the water under her immense lugs, over which were hoisted a kind of gaff-top-sail, shaped like the lugs themselves. She presented a very beautiful sight, for the breeze was fresh and the sails all filled to their fullest extent. The captain of the *Ca-Ira* stood close to the top-sail, ready to answer our hero's hail, whilst the females made anxious signals, showing their joy at seeing him. Waving his hat to them, Lieutenant Thornton, as the helm was put down a little, so that the *Vengeance* should range up partly alongside, addressed the captain of the *Ca-Ira*, telling him not to attempt to leave the coast, but to keep close in with the land, and, sooner than get within range of the frigate's guns, to run the vessel into some bight, saying that he hoped to induce the frigate to chase him, and thus leave the *Ca-Ira* free, and not to care about the privateer in their wake.

Whilst speaking, Julian Arden, who longed to get on board the *Vengeance*, hailed Lieutenant Thornton to stand by and pick him up, and, notwithstanding the tears of Mabel, and the earnest entreaties of his mother and Julia, who in this moment of excitement betrayed the interest she felt in his safety, he threw himself overboard.

The *Vengeance* immediately backed her fore-sail, and ropes being thrown to the daring and gallant youth, he was safely hauled on board.

There was only time for an ardent pressure of the hand between the two friends, for the guns of the *Etoile* began to open upon them.

"Change your dress, Julian," said our hero; "you will find garments in the cabin. Do you think they understand me on board the *chasse-mare*?"

"No fear in the world of them," said Julian. "Captain Bonafoux says he can outsail the *Etoile*, and that he will run into a bight where the frigate cannot come near. You need not be uneasy. Let us take this fellow; the frigate is full a league to leeward yet. Never mind my wet clothes; it's refreshing, this deuced hot weather. Give me a berth, for I see you are short-handed."

"Thank God! there is a chance of their escaping, Julian; and I rejoice in having you by my side. Go, get arms, for I

am determined to board this privateer, though he is full of men. I must try and cripple him first, though."

After several exchanges of broadsides, the heavy metal of the *Vengeance*, well served, left the *Etoile* in half an hour with only her main-mast standing, several of her crew killed, and numbers wounded. On board the *Vengeance* there were two killed and five wounded, and her mizen-mast shot away, when, suddenly putting her helm to port, Lieutenant Thornton ran her on board with such a severe shock that her injured fore-mast fell right along the deck, covering her guns and many of the men beneath the folds of her immense lug.

Then, with the usual cheer of British seamen, the English commander, with Julian by his side, and followed by his daring and eager crew, jumped on deck. Almost the first opponent he encountered was Bertram Gramont. He had a sash tied round his waist, in which were a brace of pistols, and rushing upon our hero with his drawn sabre in his right hand, he discharged a pistol at his head as he leaped from the shrouds upon the deck of the *Etoile*.

"Ah! Monsieur Gramont," said Lieutenant Thornton, the ball of his opponent's pistol passing through the breast of his jacket, inflicting a mere scratch, "do we meet again?"

The Frenchman was a first-rate swordsman, and a man of undoubted courage.

"Yes, Monsieur de Tourville that was, we do meet again; but this time you shall not escape me."

The Frenchman was mistaken. In general, English naval officers are not so skilful with the sword as French cavalry officers. Bertram Gramont found, however, that he had his match in skill, and twice his match in power.

Whilst the short but fierce contest raged between them, two events took place that decided the fate of the *Etoile*.

The sails over the guns had caught fire, owing to some desperate fellows beneath turning one of them loaded with grape towards the stern of the privateer, and applying a match, the iron shower actually slaughtering friend and foe. Captain Ovet was desperately wounded, and Captain Gaudet killed, with one or two of his men, whilst several of Lieutenant Thornton's men were wounded, but none killed.

The onset of Julian Arden and Bill Saunders carried all before them, when suddenly the flames burst up in a sheet from the blazing lug-sail. Whilst this was taking place, and Lieutenant Thornton had pressed his antagonist, almost at the last gasp, against the bulwarks, a figure crept out from under the long boat, between the masts, with a cocked pistol in his hand. It was Augustine Vadier. Stealing cautiously on, he

gained the back of Lieutenant Thornton, and lifting the pistol, with a smothered curse, to within a few inches of his head, he was in the act of pulling the trigger, and our hero's fate would have been sealed, had not Bill Saunders, who in the midst of the fiercest strife, kept his eye upon his master, perceived the movements of Augustine Vadier, and with a bound across the deck, despite blows of pikes and cutlasses aimed at him in passing, reached the spot. Just as the villain raised the pistol, Bill's grasp was on his throat. Nevertheless, the trigger was pulled, but the aim was disturbed. Our hero had just disarmed Bertram Gramont, inflicting a severe wound on his sword arm, but the tool was destined to slay his master. The ball from Vadier's pistol grazed the cheek of William Thornton, and passed through the brain of Bertram Gramont, who, falling back against the bulwarks, went over the side a corpse.

"Curse you, you sneaking lubber!" shouted Bill, as he raised the struggling form of Augustine Vadier in his arms; "the death of a brave man is too good for you. Die like a dog!"

And raising him in his powerful arms, he hurled him overboard.

Lieutenant Thornton saw the act, and would, if he could, have prevented it, but a rush of the enemy aft separated him and Bill; and, after another furious struggle, the men of the *Etoile*, without a commander, threw down their arms and surrendered. By great exertions the flames of the blazing lug were got under, and the efforts of the sailors were directed to separate the two vessels, and secure the prisoners. Julian Arden, who had fought most gallantly, and was unwounded, called our hero's attention to the movements of the frigate *Virginie*.

CHAPTER XL.

So completely absorbed were all parties on board the *Vengeance* and the *Etoile*, during their fierce and sanguinary struggle, that no attention had been paid to the movements of the frigate, till the thunder of her guns awoke them from their forgetfulness. Looking round, our hero perceived that the *Virginie* had altered her course, and was at that moment engaged in a combat with the strange sail they had seen in the distance some time back. A look through his glass satisfied Lieutenant Thornton that the stranger engaging the *Virginie* frigate was the *Onyx*, Captain O'Loughlin. This startled him, for the *Onyx* carried only twenty-two guns, and her complement of men, unless recruited,

was very short ; besides, in tonnage she was scarcely more than half the size of the *Virginie*, a large and remarkably fine frigate.

At about a league's distance the *chasse-mare*, the *Ca-Ira*, was seen lying to under her fore-lug and mizen, as if watching the sequel of events. In the meantime, by immense exertions, the fire on board the *Etoile* was entirely subdued, the wounded were all got together and placed in her cabin, under the care of a young surgeon belonging to the vessel, and the dead consigned to the resting-place of thousands. The *Etoile*, totally dismasted, was allowed to drift out from the land, whilst the *Vengeance* was got clear for action ; Lieutenant Thornton being resolved to do all he could to assist the *Onyx* against her formidable antagonist. Our hero had now but two-and-twenty men left fit for service, but these were eager and enthusiastic. He had two eighteen-pound carronades, and with these he might do good service.

Leaving his late opponent perfectly helpless, except that two of her boats were still serviceable, in which her crew might escape if they liked, our hero, with his own wounded made as comfortable as circumstances would permit in the *Vengeance*, refitted his mizen-mast, and spliced as much of his rigging as had suffered damage, and then prepared to sail after the two combatants, which, at that moment, were running parallel with each other. It was very apparent that Captain O'Loughlin, knowing how inferior he was to his opponent, was extremely desirous of avoiding having his sails and rigging cut to pieces by the *Virginie*'s line of fire, which evidently wished to cripple the *Onyx*, that she might not, by any chance, escape. Just as the *Vengeance* was coming rapidly up, the *Virginie* wore, and came to again on the opposite tack, bringing a fresh broadside to bear upon the bows of the corvette. This manœuvre the *Virginie* repeated twice, greatly to the annoyance of the *Onyx*. Captain O'Loughlin was getting impatient at being so foiled, and unable, from inferior sailing—for the French frigate was remarkable fast—to pass ahead or astern of the *Virginie*, ran right at her to windward. Just then the *Vengeance* opened fire upon the French frigate, having hoisted English colours, and, with her long eighteen-pound carronades, her fire did considerable damage to the *Virginie*'s rigging and yards. She was too low in the water to injure her crew ; but, using her heavy guns with great judgment, she completely cut away her braces and splintered her fore-yard so much that the frigate was forced to turn her attention to her minor antagonist, whose matchless sailing qualities enabled her, by skilful manœuvring, to avoid the broadside of the enraged crew of the *Virginie*. The *Onyx*, by this time, was able, both standing on the larboard tack, to bring

her broadside to bear at pistol-shot distance; both vessels, at the same time, keeping up an animated fire of round, grape, and musketry. Owing to the press of sail under which the *Onyx* had approached, she ranged considerably ahead. The *Virginie* now bore up, and passing athwart the stern of the *Onyx*, raked her; but the *Onyx*'s men, throwing themselves flat upon the deck, suffered but little. The *Vengeance* passed across the bows of the *Onyx*, pouring the contents of her eighteen-pound carronades, crammed with grape and canister, into the quarter of the *Virginie*, shattering her quarter galley, and besides wounding several of her men, cut the sheets of her mainsail so that the sail blew out unrestrained. A loud cheer burst from the crew of the *Onyx*, and Captain O'Loughlin, springing into the mizen shrouds, waved his hat to our hero, who was standing, returning his greeting, on the carriage of a gun.

Enraged at the audacity of the *Vengeance*, the *Virginie*, by a masterly manœuvre, shot ahead, and, suddenly wearing, caught the *Vengeance* in stays, and, for the moment, not caring for the fire of the *Onyx*, poured a deadly broadside into the lugger, intending to sink her. The iron shower passed over the *Vengeance* like a thunder storm, leaving her totally dismasted; but, singular to say, killing only one man and wounding three, a splinter, unfortunately, knocking down Master Burdett, as he sprang out of the way of the falling wreck. The brave youth was carried down into the cabin, and then Lieutenant Thornton, seeing he could do nothing more with the *Vengeance*, ordered out the two boats left uninjured, saying—

"Now, my lads, as we can do nothing here, let us pull on board your old ship; they are short-handed, and we may be of some service yet."

A loud cheer testified their eagerness to help their old commander; the boats were got out, and Captain O'Loughlin, seeing their intention, wore round, and, in five minutes, they were alongside, and up upon the deck, where they were gladly received.

Captain O'Loughlin's left arm was in a sling, Lieutenant Pole was below, severely wounded, so that the arrival of their friends was most opportune, our hero taking the post of first lieutenant at once. Bill Saunders was received by his comrades with a hearty welcome. There were six or eight of the crew of the *Fox* schooner left on board the *Vengeance*. Our hero told them, on leaving, to get her before the wind, under any sail they could manage to hoist on the stumps of their masts; for he had no doubt, notwithstanding the superior force of the *Virginie*, the *Onyx* would yet gain the day. The French frigate, by this time, had a second time hauled up on her starboard tack, and

thought to deliver her broadside with a raking effect ; but the *Onyx*, with fresh spirit, having repaired her rigging sufficiently, was ready for her. Led by two as brave and skilful officers as any in the Royal Navy, noted for having one of the best disciplined crews in the service, Captain O'Loughlin promptly threw her sails aback, and prevented the *Virginie* taking the favourable position she intended.

The manœuvre brought the *Virginie* with her stern actually pressing against the quarter of the *Onyx*, both crafts lying nearly in a parallel direction. The instant the two ships came in contact, each prepared to board the other. Lieutenant Thornton, with a picked band, and with Julian Arden by his side, sprang to repel the overwhelming numbers of the enemy, who eagerly thought to overpower the boarders of the *Onyx*. A desperate contest ensued. Twice did our hero, who appeared to have a charmed life, plant his foot upon the *Virginie's* deck, and twice was his gallant band driven back by the great superiority of numbers. Julian was felled by the butt of a musket, but Bill Saunders, with a cheer, dashed headlong amidst the press, and catching him in his arms bore him safely to the corvette. The *Onyx's* marines kept up an incessant fire of musketry, which drove back the *Virginie's*, though her marines, stationed along the whole length of the larboard gangway, kept up an incessant fire into the stern windows of the *Onyx*, strewing the cabin deck with killed and wounded.

"You must get a main-deck gun," said Lieutenant Thornton to Captain O'Loughlin, "and put it into the port of the cabin window ; I see it is cut down for that purpose."

"Yes," said O'Loughlin, "though contrary to the strict rules of the service, I cut down the sill of the cabin window on each side next the quarter. You will find the gunner has tackles and everything ready for transporting the gun to the new port, but it's a perilous duty, dear friend."

"Never mind that," said our hero, and calling Bill, and selecting a crew, with the gunner and his tackle, the gun was run out and, with a hearty cheer, fired. The very first discharge proved the great value of this new port, for, as was afterwards ascertained, four-and-twenty of the *Virginie's* crew were laid low ; it actually swept the ship from her larboard bow to her larboard quarter, and was fearful in its effects. Meantime the musketry on both sides continued with terrible effect. A ball from the main-top of the French ship unfortunately struck O'Loughlin to the deck ; it was a severe wound, but not mortal. He was just able to say—

"I give the command of the ship to Lieutenant Thornton, of

the Diamond, as gallant an officer as ever breathed. Fight, my lads, as long as the old girl floats!"

A cheer and a "God bless you!" passed from all as their gallant captain was carried below.

Satisfied, from the surgeon's report, that the wound was not mortal, the commander for the time threw all his energies and skill into action. The two vessels now remained on board each other for rather more than half-an-hour, when the Virginie began to forereach. In a moment Lieutenant Thornton brought the second aftermost gun to bear, and its discharge cut away the head rails of the French frigate, and, what was far more important, the gammoning of the bowsprit. The Virginie also, as she forged ahead, brought her guns to bear, and a desperate cannonade recommenced between the two—yard-arm to yard-arm. So well practised were the crew of the Onyx that they fired as quick again as the Virginie, whose hull was desperately shattered, her main top-mast gone, and her fore-mast tottering, and in this condition she passed on out of gun-shot.

During this respite Lieutenant Thornton and the third lieutenant of the Onyx, a Mr. Barker, a high-spirited young officer, who felt no pique whatever at his ship being worked by a senior officer, though of another ship, set to to repair damages. The hull of the Onyx was but little damaged, but her rigging and sails were so cut to pieces, that for a time she remained unmanageable. She had also lost her main top-sail yard, and her gaff was shot away, as well as her colours. She had, however, lashed a boat's ensign to the larboard, and a Union Jack to the starboard arm of her cross-jack yard. Our hero anxiously glanced around to see what had become of the Vengeance and the Etoile. The chasse-mare, the Ca-Ira, was out of sight. The Vengeance, he perceived, was, with a jury-mast and a double-reefed lug, making way before the wind, shaping her course for England. The Etoile he could distinguish in shore, with two small luggers and boats towing her towards Havre to save her from capture. The Etoile troubled him but little, and the Ca-Ira he made no doubt would make the coast of England, and land her passengers. There was but little time for thought, for both ships were rapidly repairing damages to resume their deadly contest—the Virginians furious at being baffled, and so desperately riddled and cut up by so inferior an antagonist; whilst the crew of the Onyx were enthusiastic, having full confidence in their young commander, rejoicing at the same time that their captain was not so dangerously wounded as was at first thought.

Lieutenant Thornton, after visiting O'Loughlin and Charles Pole—the latter almost insisting in rising to help, but falling

back on making the attempt—returned to his post. Julian Arden was full of spirit and capable of filling an officer's berth for the time. There was glory to be obtained in thus baffling a frigate of a thousand and nineteen tons ; whereas the *Onyx* was scarcely eight hundred, and though a large class corvette, was but a very small frigate. Her crew, when complete, only mustered two hundred men, whereas the *Virginie* then amounted to three hundred. The *Virginie*, it appeared afterwards, carried only twenty-eight guns, the *Onyx* twenty-one, but her reduced crew amounted to only one hundred and sixty, which, with eighteen fresh hands that came on board with our hero, made her complement one hundred and seventy-eight.

Both ships, when they separated, presented a very shattered and woeful appearance ; this was caused by the great quantity of sail under which they had engaged. Shattered spars, torn and riddled sails, ropes and ends were hanging in every direction.

Whilst refitting the breeze increased, and as the crew of the *Onyx* were regarding their opponents, they beheld, to their great satisfaction, their fore-mast fall over the side, from the increased motion of the sea. It was then two hours after noon, but such had been the diligence of the *Onyx's* crew, that she was enabled, with the increasing breeze, to make sail on the larboard tack towards the *Virginie*. Just as she opened fire her antagonist hauled down her colours and surrendered ; in fact, from the fall of her fore-mast she was in a perfectly defenceless state.

Whilst the *Onyx's* officers and crew are rejoicing over their victory—dearly bought, it is true—we will follow the movements of the *chasse-mare Ca-Ira*, previous to, and after her escape out of, Havre.

CHAPTER XLI.

ON casting anchor before the little village of Eure, some five leagues from Havre, Madame Coulancourt became intensely anxious about her son, but from this anxiety she was quickly relieved, as our readers already know.

As soon as the tide turned, the *chasse-mare* again weighed anchor, under a very light wind and a thick mist. This latter circumstance greatly pleased the captain of the *Ca-Ira*, as it would enable him to drop down the river without attracting observation. Knowing every yard of the navigation, he continued safely descending with the tide, keeping well the western

shore. The smuggler was one of the largest vessels of that class out of the port of Havre, and was notorious for the many successful trips she had made in the contraband trade. Captain Bonafoux was a rough, though a good kind of man in his way—faithful and steadfast to any bargain or contract in which he engaged.

Monsieur Plessis, who knew his character, had agreed, for a large sum, that he should either put them on board the *Vengeance* or a British vessel, or, failing in this, to land them on the English coast. At a late hour the ladies retired to rest in the large and well-arranged cabin.

Julian Arden and Jean Plessis continued on deck, extremely anxious, for the mist was so thick that the navigation of the river became critical; but Captain Bonafoux, who was quite at home in either clear or foggy weather, assured them he was steering a straight course out to sea, though he feared small progress could be made till sun-rise, and such was the case; for when the sun rose, and the breeze with it, and the fog lifted, he found he was only a mile off the port. He was startled on perceiving the *Etoile* privateer away to their right, and, some four miles to seaward, they caught sight of the *Vengeance*; they did not, however, see the frigate *Virginie*.

Hoisting the red flag, the signal agreed upon, Captain Bonafoux bore away. As he did so, the *Etoile* put her helm up and slacked her sheets, in pursuit.

"That craft," said Julian Arden, "has evidently been watching for us. I wish to heavens I was on board the *Vengeance*, for I am sure there will be a fight between that vessel and the *Vengeance*; what is she called?"

"That is the *Etoile* privateer, Captain Obet," replied the skipper of the *Ca-Ira*; "but in this light wind I can outsail her. She is a very fine craft, but a dull sailer in light winds; she is under-masted. *Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed, "look here," pointing seaward; "there is the *Virginie* frigate, crowding sail, and heading as near as she can lie for the coast."

"Keep up the red flag, at all events," said Julian, greatly excited, "and stand to meet the *Vengeance*, she sees us."

The hoisting of additional sail, the trampling of feet, and consequent bustle attending a chase, roused the females below from their slight slumbers, and, being intensely anxious, they were soon dressed and on deck.

Mabel, taking Julian's arm, eagerly questioned him as to which was the *Vengeance*, for she at once perceived there was some new danger to apprehend.

"There is the *Vengeance*, dear Mabel," replied Julian; "I wish I was on board her, and beside my gallant friend. That is

the Etoile privateer following us ; William will surely fight her, to stop her pursuit."

"Ah," said Mabel, "that he will. Look! that ship is full of men ; I wonder if William has as many on board the Vengeance? She is coming towards us ; what a handsome vessel she is!" and her heart beat with painful anxiety as she spoke.

Julia now joined them, and Julian exclaimed—"By Heaven! if she comes near enough I will swim on board her."

Julia felt that she changed colour, as he addressed those words to her, for Mabel went to her mother ; but, turning away her face, she said, "That would be madness, Monsieur Julian."

Julian Arden was extremely glad of the society of Julia Plessis—her kindness of heart, sweet, cheerful disposition, and captivating manners, had won his esteem, and had not his love been previously given to Colonel Packenham's daughter, there is little doubt but that the very pretty Julia, notwithstanding her disparity of birth, would have won his affection.

"Recollect, Monsieur Julian," added Mademoiselle Plessis, "your mother and sister require your protection."

"They cannot be benefited by my staying here, Julia," said the young man, anxiously watching the Vengeance ; "I can swim like a fish, and can be of service to my gallant friend."

On came the Vengeance, and, as already related, our hero hailed and spoke the Ca-Ira. Julian's jumping overboard created a painful sensation, but they saw he got safely on board the lugger. They witnessed the engagement between the two privateers ; but fearing the Etoile might win, or the frigate cut them off, Captain Bonafoux crowded all sail along the coast, keeping an anxious eye upon the contest.

The three females stood, eagerly watching, and listening to the remarks of the captain to Monsieur Plessis. At length the former, with an oath, declared that the Vengeance had dismasted and taken the Etoile. It was very evident by his tone and manner, smuggler as he was, that he felt as a Frenchman.

"Sacre Dieu! that Lieutenant Thornton must be le diable! with a handful of men, and only a few guns, to take the Etoile. Ha! there goes the frigate's guns. The Virginie is engaged with another ship, not near her size. We must not loiter, or you, madame, may pay the penalty."

And, despite Mabel's tears, and the entreaties of both mother and daughter, Captain Bonafoux bore away for the coast of England, leaving them all in a dreadful state of anxiety concerning the final fate of the Vengeance.

It was Captain Bonafoux's intention to land them in a small

bay to the eastward of Torquay. It was a sheltered bight, and during the night he would be able to put them on shore, scarcely three miles from the town of Torquay. To this arrangement the unhappy mother and daughter could make no objection.

With the fine breeze then blowing, the chasse-mare stood in for the coast of England, not without some apprehension on the part of the Captain of falling in with either a privateer or a cruiser under British colours, though Monsieur Plessis assured him he would be perfectly safe, and incur no risk whatever of being detained.

But it so happened that he made the coast during the night, and about early dawn was standing into the little, and then neglected, bay of Babicomb. He was, however, seen by the coast-guard, and, immediately after coming to an anchor, a boat, pulled by six oars, and an officer in the stern sheets, came off. The *Ca-Ira* had hoisted English colours. On coming alongside, Madame Coulancourt explained matters to the lieutenant of the coast-guard, and, as the captain of the *Ca-Ira* called himself a fisherman, and had neither arms, nor ammunition, nor cargo on board, but had incurred a great risk to save English subjects and French Royalists from persecution and imprisonment, the officer was quite willing that he should land his passengers and set sail for France again.

Before the expiration of an hour the whole party on board the *Ca-Ira*, with the kind assistance of the coast-guard, were safely landed with their effects, and the shelter of the station was afforded them till post-chaises could be procured to carry them to Torquay.

The joy Madame Coulancourt and Mabel would otherwise have felt on setting foot once more upon England's soil was damped by the uncertainty they felt respecting the fate of our hero and Julian Arden. Still they began to look forward with hope, and after two or three days' residence at an inn in Torquay, then but an insignificant village, they started for London, where Monsieur Plessis had previously gone and hired a furnished house ready for their reception.

The morning after their arrival their joy and happiness was complete, for in looking over the *Times* paper, hoping for news, they saw a paragraph headed, "Brilliant action of the *Onyx* corvette with the fine French frigate the *Virginie*, of twenty-eight guns, and capture of the latter, after a desperately contested action of nearly four hours. The *Onyx* corvette arrived the day before yesterday in Plymouth, with the *Virginie* French frigate of twenty-eight guns in tow, and under the temporary command of Lieutenant Thornton, of the *Diamond*.

The famous French privateer, *La Vengeance*, was also in company. It seems that this celebrated privateer is the one the *Diamond* frigate, under the command of Sir Sidney Smith, attempted to cut out of the Port of Havre, but owing to untoward circumstances, caused by wind and tide, failed, and Sir Sidney Smith, with his officers, became prisoners. The *Vengeance*, it seems, was a second time attempted to be cut out of a French port by the boats of the *Onyx*, commanded by Captain O'Loughlin and Lieutenant Thornton; and this time they successfully accomplished their object, capturing a fine armed brig at the same time. The *Vengeance* made a most furious resistance, being chained to the shore and assisted by a body of troops on the beach; but the gallantry of our sailors overcame all obstacles. We regret to add that in the contest with the *Virginie* Captain O'Loughlin was severely wounded, as well as his first lieutenant, Mr. Charles Pole. The *Onyx* was in consequence placed under the command of Lieutenant Thornton, and after a severe contest the *Virginie*, being dismasted and unmanageable, surrendered. There is a good deal of mystery in this gallant affair, which we are unable to explain; but it is confidently rumoured in naval circles that this Lieutenant Thornton claims to be the only son and heir of the late Sir Oscar de Bracy, Governor of —; and that a volunteer on board the *Onyx*, who behaved most gallantly in action, of the name of Julian Arden, claims to be the next representative to the title and estates of Sir Granby Etherton. Be this as it may, to all appearance there will be something to be done in our law courts if these rumours turn out correct."

"Dear mother," said Mabel, her cheeks glowing with excitement and delight, "all are safe and well, except generous Captain O'Loughlin, and I trust in God he will soon recover."

"How merciful and how gracious," returned Madame Coulandcourt, her eyes moist with tears of thankfulness, "is Divine Providence, in not only shielding all those dear to us, but covering them with well merited fame."

"Ah! deeply grateful indeed we ought to be," said Mabel, and, throwing her arms round her mother's neck, she fairly shed tears of joy at being thus suddenly relieved from deep anxiety.

Julia Plessis became extremely thoughtful, and apparently in much less joyous spirits after her arrival in London. Mabel perceived this change in her friend, but imputed it to her secret regret at leaving France. Therefore she did not make any remark upon it.

Whilst waiting anxiously, but with grateful and contented

hearts, for the arrival in London of Lieutenant Thornton and Julian Arden, we will take a glance at the proceedings of Sir Howard Etherton during the four years from the period when he first became possessed of the title and estates of the Etherton's. Though perfectly aware of Mabel's claims to the fortune bequeathed her out of those estates, yet, satisfied in his own mind that she would never be able to prove either her birth or right, he congratulated himself on his selfish and unnatural conduct. So intensely disagreeable did Sir Howard render their home that two of the sisters made runaway marriages, neither of them, as far as birth was concerned, very distinguished. Though entitled to a certain amount of fortune, Sir Howard refused to give a shilling till they were of age, and left the two girls and their young husbands, ensigns in a marching regiment, to make the best of it. Miss Jane remained sole mistress of Etherton Hall, but so closely watched, and so limited in her expenditure, that even she, if she could have found an ensign bold enough to take her, would have gladly abandoned her single state of blessedness. She was not destined, however, long to remain even the nominal mistress of Etherton Hall, for Sir Howard, penurious and avaricious, and inwardly prompted by some feeling of insecurity as to his hold of the Etherton estates, resolved to marry, and to marry for mere wealth.

Possessed of an old title, a handsome person, and specious manners, when it suited him to disguise his natural disposition, he was not long before he gained a lady who, as far as money was concerned, was unexceptionable. Miss Brabazon was the only daughter of a wealthy banker. She was nine-and-twenty, but acknowledged only three-and-twenty summers; was very tall, very masculine, and exceedingly plain. Her dependants and domestics declared she had a violent and headstrong temper. The world, in general, supposed her to be the reverse. We do not always display our amiable qualities to our friends, and, for the same reason, we suppose, we keep back our little foibles. Miss Euphemia Brabazon started in life with the intention of captivating at least an earl's son. Eighty thousand pounds fortune, her father having been heard to declare would be his daughter's portion. She had waited from the age of eighteen to two-and-twenty very patiently for a coronet, but those pretty appendages were not to be had at that period quite so readily as some years afterwards. Four years passed, and she remained a spinster. Ominous nine-and-twenty came, but no earl. At a civic entertainment Miss Brabazon was introduced to Sir Howard Etherton, who was looking for eighty or one hundred thousand pounds, if they were to be had. He did not see Miss

Brabazon's countenance when he danced with her, for a draft on the bank of Brabazon, Brassington, and Blinkiron floated in the air between her sharp features and the baronet's eyes. Finally, the baronet proposed. Miss Euphemia thought of her next birthday: she would be thirty! A baronet, and of a long line of ancestors, wealthy and handsome, much superior to many of the lords she had seen years back, and thought so much of. Besides, Sir Howard, with a rent-roll of fifteen thousand a year, must have been fascinated with her person. Sir Howard proposed, and was blushing accepted. Mr. Brabazon unhesitatingly gave his consent, and they were married. Somehow, the banker induced his son-in-law, by laying before him a plan for increasing his eighty thousand to two hundred thousand pounds in a year or two, to allow the eighty thousand to remain in the bank, and Sir Howard became a sleeping partner.

It is said that persons of a similarity of dispositions always agree. We do not pretend to dispute this question. All we can say is, that Lady Howard and Miss Etherton resembled one another to an extraordinary degree in despotism; but, alas! Etherton Hall, though a large and spacious mansion, was not nearly large enough to hold the wife and sister of Sir Howard.

Consequently, Miss Etherton abandoned the field in one short month, and took herself off, and went to live with her mother; and as no human being ever doubted her being of age, she demanded her fortune, with interest. Her brother, who never parted with money till forced, refused the interest; so Miss Jane placed her cause in the hands of a solicitor, who not only perfectly agreed with Miss Etherton as to her rights, but also agreed to take herself and fortune, for better and worse, and thus save costs. This offer Miss Jane accepted, and the last in the female line of the Ethertons resigned her maiden name. Mr. Chatterton, the solicitor, soon forced Sir Howard to pay, not only the fortune, but a bill of costs, proportioned to the value of his spouse. Lady Etherton declared her to be an unnatural, degenerate girl, to marry an attorney. "Heavens! what has the world come to?"

Such was the posture of affairs at Etherton Hall; the only difference perceptible to the domestics was, now that they had a mistress and no master, for, strange to say, Lady Etherton had completely gained the ascendancy. They had one child, a boy, the future heir, as Lady Etherton declared, of unbounded wealth; for the firm of Brabazon, Brassington, and Blinkiron was in a most prosperous state; their speculations numerous, and their gains astounding. Sir Howard was led to believe

that in two years more his share would be near three hundred thousand pounds.

One morning at breakfast Lady Etherton happened to be reading the *Morning Post*, whilst Sir Howard was examining into the merits of a peregrine pie.

"Good Heaven, Howard!" exclaimed her ladyship, dropping the paper and turning pale, "what is the meaning of this?"

"Of what, my dear?" returned the amiable husband, suspending his operations.

"Why, good God! there can be no meaning in this strange paragraph. Who is Sir Oscar de Bracy? and what Mr. Julian Arden is this who has the presumption to claim your family name, and not only claims the name, but the editor of this paper says is a claimant to the Etherton title and estates? It must be a vile libel, and the fellow ought to be horsewhipped and then prosecuted."

The knife and fork fell from Sir Howard's hands; he turned exceedingly pale, saying, "Good God! how odd! Pray show me the paper."

"Why, you look as pale as a ghost, Howard!" said her ladyship. "Is there really anything in this paragraph?" And she handed her spouse the paper. Sir Howard's hand shook as he took it, and read the same account of the brilliant action between the Onyx and the Virginie that Madame Coulancourt and Mabel had read that very morning in the *Times*, only that in the *Morning Post* there was a great deal more of family concerns, the writer seeming to be well informed as to how matters stood with respect to the Etherton title and estate.

The baronet remained several moments plunged in gloomy thought. He was younger than his wife, but looked older, for his habits of life and fretful temper and disposition had brought a look of premature care on his features. His thoughts reverted to the past, and his early association with William Thornton, whom, secretly, he did all in his power to degrade and humiliate; of Mabel, cruelly treated by his father, and scorned and disowned by himself; and now the man he hated, for no other reason than his superiority over him in all things, had not only achieved fame, but would most likely succeed to a noble fortune and a honoured name, whilst the despised Mabel and her brother would, he could not conceal from himself, deprive him of rank and fortune. These thoughts and reflections take time to write, but they rush with lightning speed through the brain.

"What on earth can make you so gloomy, Howard?"

said Lady Etherton, rather startled. "Is there any foundation for the strange assertion in this paper? Who is Julian Arden?"

"I am to suppose he is my uncle's son," said Sir Howard, with some hesitation. He then explained to his astonished lady how his father's elder brother had been married; though no one knew anything about it till long after his death; and that his father always doubted it, and that in fact there were no proofs as yet showing that he had been, or that Julian and Mabel Arden were his children.

"Then I am to understand," said Lady Etherton, with contemptuous bitterness, "that supposing these Ardens can prove their father's marriage and their own birth, you will be deprived of title and estates?"

"Such, I suppose, is the law of the land," said the baronet, gloomily. "You can readily imagine this stroke of fortune was unavoidable on my father's part; he could not, when he succeeded to the title and estates of the Ethertons, be aware that his succession was illegal."

"A poor consolation to me, sir," almost fiercely returned the lady, pale with vexation, "with my great expectations, I might have looked higher."

"There is no doubt, madam," said Sir Howard, bitterly, "but that you might and did look for a higher rank in your husband, but in doing so, you lost what our neighbours the French call your '*première jeunesse*.'" So saying, Sir Howard rose from his seat.

"You add insult to deception," cried the enraged Lady Etherton; "thank God my fortune is secured from such a fatality as——"

The door opened, and a servant entered the room with a letter for Sir Howard.

"A man on horseback, Sir Howard, left this, from your solicitor, and says it is most important."

Lady Etherton paused whilst the baronet broke the seal; the letter contained only three lines. Stunned, incapable of uttering a word, he stood bewildered, confused, and powerless. Recovering her nerves, Lady Etherton advanced, and, with a look of contempt, took the note from her husband's hands, and cast her eyes upon the lines; the next moment she uttered a faint exclamation, and fell back upon a chair, with difficulty keeping herself from fainting. The words which caused this acute sensation of suffering in husband and wife were as follows:—

"I am so confounded, Sir Howard, that I can scarcely write

the words. The Bank of Brabazon, Brassington, and Blink-iron has stopped payment ; lose not a moment in coming up to town.

“ Yours obediently,

“ D. C. STRIPEM.”

CHAPTER XLII.

As soon as Lieutenant Thornton arrived in Plymouth with the *Virginie* and *Vengeance*, his first care, after the usual formalities had been gone through, was to get Commander O'Loughlin and Lieutenant Pole on shore, both being so far recovered as to bear moving ; and the physician who was consulted on their reaching Plymouth, decided that they should be immediately removed into the country, declaring that a few weeks would completely restore them.

Captain O'Loughlin wrote immediately to his betrothed, Agatha, and made as light of his wounds as possible. He would not allow his friend to remain longer with him ; he was able to move about with a crutch, and the surgeon assured him he would not have the least lameness in a month. Lieutenant Pole was also fast recovering.

Excessively anxious concerning Madame Coulaucourt and his beloved Mabel, whom he still hoped had safely reached England, Lieutenant Thornton and his friend Julian Arden prepared to leave Plymouth for London, feeling assured that if the party he was so anxious about had reached England, he would surely hear of them there. But Julian Arden, before he left Plymouth, was destined to suffer a severe and stunning misfortune.

To his extreme alarm, he heard a rumour that agitated him greatly. Lieutenant-General Pakenham was to have been Governor of Plymouth, but the alarming illness of his eldest daughter, brought on by exposure, it was said, to the pestiferous climate of Sierra Leone, had obliged him to decline the post, and to leave England for some months' residence in Madeira. This was all he could learn in Plymouth, but it caused him great agony of mind. He feared his betrothed had imbibed the seeds of that fatal fever which raged at the time of their meeting ; and became doubly anxious to reach London, where he hoped to hear intelligence from the General's solicitor, whose address he had.

Need we paint the joy and rapture of the lovers when they met? Many of our fair readers, no doubt, have experienced the same—felt the like intensity only once in life. To those who have not, we can only say we trust it is before them. From joy to sorrow is but a step. Poor Julian Arden learned, with feelings impossible to describe, that General Pakenham's daughter had died in Madeira, and that her distracted father was remaining there for his own health, to recover from the terrible shock at losing his beloved child.

Minute details, at this period of our story, would only tire the patience of our readers; neither will we inflict on them dull law matters. It will be quite sufficient to say that, after six months' process in law courts, Julian's and Mabel's births and right were fully established, as well as the former's right to the title and estate of Etherton, though Howard Arden—for to that name he was forced to return—threw every possible difficulty and obstruction in the way. Sir Julian Etherton generously offered to divide the property, which offer was scornfully refused. Mr. Arden, his spouse, and child, retired into Yorkshire, where they lived upon the interest of £10,000, recovered from the wreck of the firm of Brabazon, Brassington, and Blinkiron. Whether they lived happily or not we cannot say; our readers may judge by their knowledge of their characters.

Sir Julian Etherton continued the handsome fortune settled on the widow of the late baronet, who very graciously acknowledged and thankfully enjoyed the gift as long as she lived.

Lieutenant Thornton completely established his claims to the name, estates, and private property of the late Sir Oscar de Bracy. However, before this took place, he was made a commander. With the immense personal property of his lamented father, Sir Oscar purchased a fine estate, not many miles from Etherton Hall. Over his entire property Monsieur Jean Plessis was made agent, whilst Madame Coulancourt bestowed upon that gentleman a sum of £5,000, to be, if necessary, a marriage portion for his daughter Julia. Our hero and his attached friend, O'Loughlin, were united to their fair betrothed in the same place and at the same time.

Julian was sad and dispirited, but strove all in his power not to show his deep and heartfelt affliction at the loss of his tenderly-loved Cherry Pakenham.

Some eight months after his marriage, to the intense grief of his beloved Mabel, our hero accepted the command of the captured *Virginie*, accounted one of the handsomest frigates in either the English or French service. Post-Captain O'Loughlin

was also to take the command of a forty-four gun frigate, and both sailed for the Mediterranean to join the fleet under Rear-Admiral Nelson. They were present at the battle of the Nile, where the gallantry and skill with which Sir Oscar brought his ship into action, and the part he performed, elicited the admiration of all, and won the praise of the gallant Nelson himself.

Sir Julian Etherton so distinguished himself in his character of volunteer, that he was offered a commission, but he begged to remain as he was; his devoted attachment to Sir Oscar would not allow him to leave him. The year following, the renowned *Virginie* was at Acre, and there our hero once more embraced his friend, Sir Sidney Smith.

Peace being concluded, the *Virginie* returned to England, when Sir Oscar retired, to the heartfelt joy of his still fair and beautiful wife, from the service; and, shortly after, Captain O'Loughlin did the same. Time and active service had softened the grief of Sir Julian Etherton. Constantly in the society of the amiable and engaging Julia Plessis, the young baronet finally, from feeling and association, became tenderly attached to her, and ended by making the devoted and always attached Julia his wife—an act he never regretted.

Let not our readers imagine for a moment that the generous and simple-hearted coxswain, William Thornton, was forgotten by our hero, who would have loaded him with gifts, and built him a house on his own estate, but the old and happy coxswain loved his little cottage. The wish of his heart was gratified; his darling protégée was the pride of the service he loved, and every year, as long as his powers remained, he became an honoured guest at Sir Oscar's.

Honest Bill Saunders accompanied Sir Oscar through all his perils as his favourite and attached coxswain, receiving many a sword from conquered ships, and proud he was on those occasions. Sir Oscar had purchased the famous lugger, the *Vengeance*; she was fitted out after the peace as a schooner-yacht, with Bill for skipper. For many years Bill was the admiration of all the jolly tars he encountered in his frequent rambles. To them he used to relate his adventures in France, and especially he recounted the scientific manner in which he performed the part of a deaf and dumb Frenchman, and, in giving illustrations, he uttered such a succession of guttural sounds as startled his hearers. At length, Bill married, and then his rambles were confined to his comfortable home on his master's estate. The young De Bracys, in after years, dearly loved to visit Bill, his smiling wife, and his children; to listen to the wonderful yarns he spun of his master's and his own adventures.

Many were the presents and marriage portions sent over to France to good Dame Moret and her daughters.

Now, gentle reader, our yarn is spun. If this unpretending story enables you to pass an hour free from the cares of the world, our object will have been accomplished.

THE END.

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